

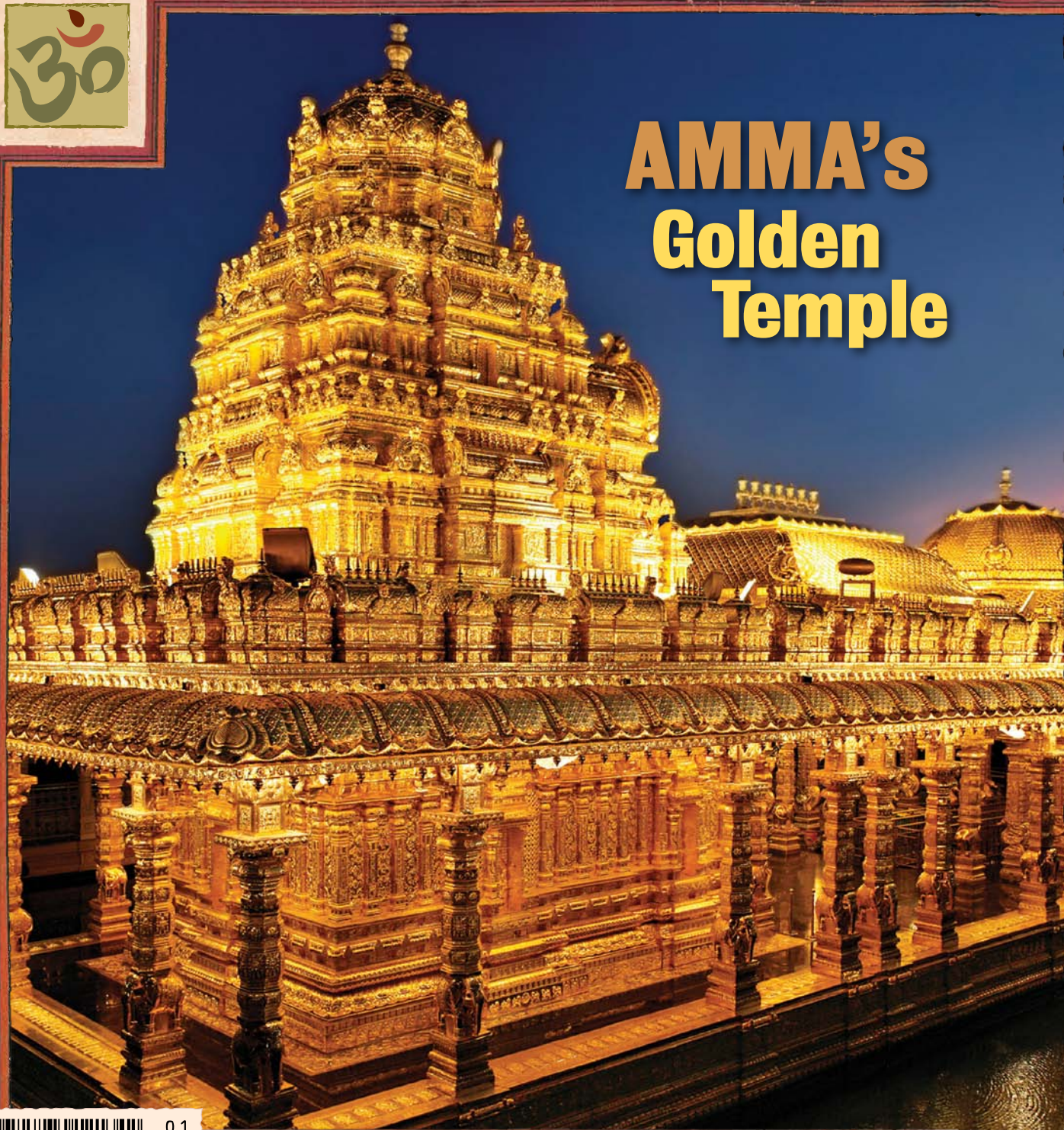
# HINDUISM

January/February/March, 2011 US\$7.95

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



## AMMA's Golden Temple



NARAYANI FEEDAM



TAMIL NADU ART AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT

COVER: The Sri Mahalakshmi Narayani Golden Temple gleams at dusk near Vellore, in South India, the epicenter of a new and dynamic Hindu organization; (above) 1,000 dancers performed for the 1,000th anniversary of the "Big Temple" in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2011 • HINDU YEAR 5112  
VIKITA, THE YEAR OF CHALLENGING CHANGE

*Bodhinatha Veylanswami* [www.gurudeva.org](http://www.gurudeva.org)

### INTERNATIONAL

- Feature:** A Rare Glimpse of Vellore's Golden Temple to the Goddess, and its Remarkable Institutions **18**  
**Food:** Exploring the Difficult Ethics of the Foods We Choose to Eat **30**  
**Hindu History:** An Authentic History of Modern India for School Children—1947 to Today **37**  
**Insight:** Serious Progress in Religious Life Requires the Persistent Effort Called Sadhana **54**

### LIFESTYLE

- Ayurveda:** These Natural Alternatives to Hypertension Drugs Won't Hasten your Death **33**  
**Parenting:** One Mother's Struggle to Provide Her Daughter with the Perfect School Lunch **70**

**Books:** *Bollywood Weddings* Surveys the Cultural Quirks of Hindu American Marriages **72**

### OPINION

- In My Opinion:** The Challenge of Capturing and Holding the Interest of our Youth **9**  
**Publisher's Desk:** Five Core Hindu Practices **10**  
**Letters** **12**  
**From the Agamas:** The Divinity of Mantras **17**

### DIGESTS

- Global Dharma** **6**  
**Quotes & Quips** **14**  
**Digital Dharma** **86**

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# ROLL THE DRUMS!

Dancing across the floor while playing, drummers perform in the Shanti Mandapam at the Narayani Peedam. This new Hindu stronghold intertwines Hindu art and culture with religion, as in the days of yore... page 18



# GLOBAL DHARMA

INDIA

## A Victory For Ganga Champions

THE THOUGHT OF DAMS IN the Himalayas evokes images of the giant, highly controversial Tehri dam, which impounds the Bhagirathi River. High above Rishikesh, its reservoir generates 1,000 megawatts. But its construction required massive deforestation and the relocation of 100,000 people. Built on a seismic fault line, it poses the risk of catastrophe.

Hundreds of other dam projects have been proposed for the Himalayan region. Eighteen were scheduled for the Bhagirathi, the sacred river that carries water from Gomukh in Gangotri for 217km to Devprayag, where it merges with the Alaknanda River to become the Ganges proper. Just two Bhagirathi dams are operational, the giant Tehri and

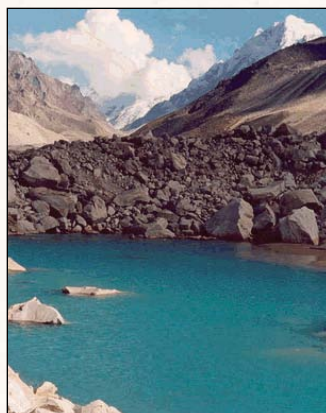
the Maneri Bali I. The latter is a "run-of-the-river" dam, which means it diverts the river into an underground tunnel to generate power. This type of dam does not create a surface reservoir to submerge forest tracts and habitation. Instead, it it leaves the river bed dry. Road building and underground blasting required to build the dam destroys the pristine surroundings. If all the current plans for similar dams were realized, the Ganges would be a dry river bed all the way from Gangotri to Haridwar.

Recently environmentalists and other people who oppose the dams prevailed. The Lohar-nag Pala project, just 70km from Gangotri was halted in March 2009, after noted India scientist, A. D. Agarwal, nearly died during a hunger strike in protest. "The water is not ordinary water to a Hindu. It is a matter of the life and death of Hindu faith," pleaded Agarwal, former dean of the Indian Institute of Technology. On September 2, 2010, under pressure from environmental and religious groups the



Swami Avimukteshwaranand, challenges Minister of Environment, Jairam Ramesh on power development along the Ganges

Central Government officially cancelled the dam. This was the third such cancellation. The government finally declared the 135 km stretch from Gangotri to Uttarkashi as "sensitive" under the Environmental Protection Act. A coalition of environmentalists and Hindu groups under the leadership of Swami Avimukteshwaranand, the authorized representative of the Shankracharya of Dwarka and Jyotirmath, was instrumental in persuading the government to intervene. Search Google and YouTube for "Save the Ganga."



Waters from Gomukh will still run freely to Uttarkashi

INDIA

## Ayodhya Split Three Ways by Court Decree

THE BABRI MASJID WAS BUILT in Ayodhya in 1532 by India's first Muslim conquerer, Babur. He was known for his ruthless destruction of Hindu and Jain temples and monuments. The site is widely accepted by Hindus as the birthplace of Lord Rama. In 1949, some Hindus surreptitiously placed images of Rama and Sita inside the Mosque, re-igniting the ancient dispute. A court case was filed, the site was deemed "a disputed structure" and remained locked, with the court case pending, for forty years. In 1992, 150,000

.....  
1992: Karsevaks in the act of destroying Ayodhya's Babri Masjid

Hindus rallied at Ayodhya to advocate building a Rama temple on the site. Among them was a small coterie of "kar sevaks" who used the rally as an opportunity to destroy the Masjid. Subsequent bloody riots cost the lives of 2,000.

Excavations of the site by the Archeological Survey of India in 1970, 1992 and 2003 unearthed evidence proving the Masjid had been built on top of a Hindu temple. Finally, in September 2010, the High Court of Allahabad ruled to split the land into three parts, two of which were given to two Hindu groups and one to the Muslims contingent. The factions plan to appeal the division to the Supreme Court of India. But the general consensus is that this is a big step forward toward a resolution of the sixty-year-old dispute.

TEMPLES

## A Thousand Years and More

THE BRIHADISHWARAR TEMPLE in the town of Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, was built by Emperor Rajaraja Chola in 1010CE. It is popularly known as the "Big Temple," with a 216-foot main sanctum tower. The world's first complete granite temple, it is a monument to the religious dedication and the heights of the Tamil Saivite Hindu culture.

In September 2010, a five-day festival marked the millennium

celebrations. A thousand folk artists performed in two days of cultural events. A month-long dance festival was held beginning December 26.

The temple languished in neglect during the British Raj. Today it is a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site that is gradually returning to its status as a living spiritual and cultural center, a testimony to the power of timeless Hindu faith.

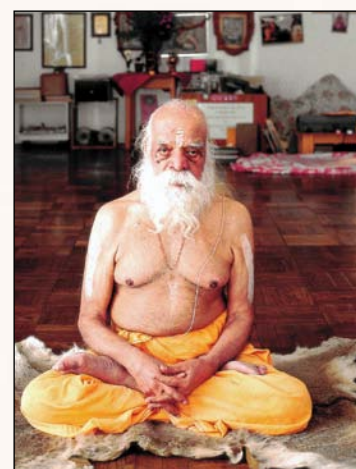


Following decades of restoration, an influx of tourist dollars and the rise of Hindu faith, the treasure of Thanjavur is being reborn

TRANSITIONS

## Yogi Bua Passes On

SWAMI BUA WAS ONE OF THE greatest yoga practitioners of the 20th century. He passed away in Bengaluru on July 23, 2010. Though he never disclosed his age, his closest devotees place the date of his birth at 1889 or 1890, making him 120 years old. Named Hindu of the Year in 1998, he was featured in the January 1999 issue of HINDUISM TODAY, available on our website.



Since 1972, Swami Bua taught yoga almost daily from a modest New York apartment



Pilgrims to Tiruchendur receive a blessing. The giant temple mascots are now getting an upgrade to treatment and health care.

ANIMAL WELFARE

## Better Care For Temple Elephants

TAMIL NADU HAS OVER 100 captive temple elephants. In the summer of 2009 veterinarian researchers studied them and found 90% suffered from one or more serious foot ailments. A conference of veterinarians, foresters, zoo-keepers, temple administrators and mahouts (including those with

privately-owned elephants) was held at the Vandaloore Zoological Park and established a new diet and fitness regimen for the pachyderms.

Madurai Meenakshi's fifteen-year-old elephant, Parvathy from Assam, now has a shower-bath twice a day and periodic oil massages. And the temple mahouts must take their elephants out for two one-hour walks each day.

The daily menu of 550 pounds of grass now includes twigs, neem and mango leaves, nutrition balls, multi-vitamin tablets, and for dessert, at least a dozen bananas after each meal.



ENVIRONMENT

## Banning Plastic Bags

PLASTIC BAGS, ESPECIALLY THE ultra-thin polythene kind, are a menace if not recycled. Humanity produces nearly a trillion plastic bags a year. Most are discarded after a single use. They pollute the environment, take 1,000 years to degrade in landfills, cause the death of

animals, are made from oil and clog drains in cities, leading to flooding and loss of life.

Ireland taxes plastic bags to encourage recycling and alternatives. Many countries require shopkeepers to charge for bags. Plastic bags are banned in Bangladesh and India is moving in the same direction. Himachal Pradesh was the first Indian state to enforce the ban. Others are following suit. China banned ultra thin bags and requires a charge for others. But paper bags cost us millions of trees. What to do? Cloth bags and heavy-weight plastic bags and cloth bags are good; you can clean and reuse them. Bags made of corn (available soon) will compost in two weeks. The key is, whatever type of bag you use: reuse, recycle, reuse, recycle...







Dinesh Patel is taking that surname beyond the confines of the hotel business. A 2008 import from Lucknow, India, Dinesh placed second in a baseball pitching contest held by US talent scouts in India. Today he throws his gomph fastballs for Pittsburgh's GCL Pirates.

## INTEGRATION

# The Patel Brand Is Big in USA

THE 2000 US CENSUS LISTS "Patel" as 172nd among the nation's 1,000 most common surnames, ahead of Gardner, Peters, Richards, Spencer and Andrews. Most Patel families came in the first wave of immigrants from India in the late 60s and 70s. As of 2007, 60% of the mid-range motels and hotels in America were owned

by Indians, one third by Patels, mostly Hindus from Gujarat. No, *patel* does not mean "hotel." Traditionally, Patels were state land revenue collectors in ancient India. Business acumen and hard work runs deep in the genes of Patels, who are major contributors to the US economy and have made the American dream a reality.

## BRIEFLY...

**THE NATURALLY-FORMED ICE** Lingam in the 13,500-foot-high Himalayan Amarnath cave shrine of Lord Siva in Southern Kashmir had totally melted by August 2, 2010. The annual pilgrimage, which started on July 1 and ended August

25, brought 600,000 pilgrims—100,000 more than last year. Officials say visitor heat is causing the rapid meltdown.

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF** India has unearthed the remains of 21 massive temples at

## CELEBRITY

# Julia Roberts: "I Am a Hindu"

IN AUGUST, 2010, 42-YEAR-OLD actress Julie Roberts, in an interview for the fashion magazine *Elle*, said, "I'm definitely a practicing Hindu." She tells the magazine that she and husband Danny Moder and their three children, 5-year-old twins Phinaeus and Hazel and 3-year-old Henry, all go to a Hindu temple to "chant and pray and celebrate." The interview came in the

wake of her film "Eat, Pray, Love" which took her to India and Bali. Her casual statement sent waves through the media, which made a big deal over her "conversion." In a later interview she clarified she did not convert during the shoot in India but had already been practicing Hinduism. Then America's sweetheart and model Hollywood mother put a lid on it, saying, "I'm done talking about religion." But by then the news had touched off yet another positive blogosphere discussion on the growing adoption of Hindu beliefs and values across the US.



Julia Roberts's brief declaration of her Hindu faith has added yet more good energy to the wave of Hinduism's rise to the mainstream

Ashapuri, 36km from Bhopal. The project has been named "Bhootnath Temple Series," as the largest edifice is to Bhootnath, a form of Lord Siva.

## SIKKIM'S GOVERNMENT

withdrew subsidies of chemical fertilizers in 2003, gradually replacing them with organic alternatives. On September 2010, Chief Minister, Pawan

Chamling, said, "Though the task ahead is challenging, we are absolutely committed to go 100% organic by 2015."

## RESEARCH BY THE PEW FORUM ON

Religion shows that nearly half of all Americans have changed or dropped their faith sometime in life, most before age 24. Half of that group have chosen not to join another faith.



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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## IN MY OPINION

# The Need for Balance in Faith

To keep youth interested, let us bring forward Hinduism's myriad approaches to liberation

BY VARUN MEHTA

A FRIEND HAD BROUGHT me soup, and I trembled trying to finish it. Instead of playing Holi with my friends on the university campus, I lay sick in bed. My phone rang and it was Kumar Uncle, wondering when I was going to show up to the event as one of the youth volunteers. Just as I finished my explanation, an auntie from the Sai Baba group called asking for help with their event the next day.

I had a fever. For the first time in my life, I didn't want to do any of it. I didn't want to help, I didn't want to volunteer. Maybe it was the fever talking, maybe not.

As a young adult, I have been blessed with the company of knowledgeable people. Whether it was my interest in the *Gita*, wanting to learn music or helping the homeless of Austin, Texas, I was able to find someone or some group to quench my thirst. For me, three of Hinduism's paths to liberation interested me and drew me to my faith. In this day and age, I see that most opportunities available for young Hindus are along the lines of serving the needs of others. Karma yoga, the path of service, has become mainstream. It is emphasized far more than the other paths to moksha, causing a bottleneck effect with the newer generation's interest in Hinduism. Why is it that in current times, we have seemingly forgotten the need for devotional and intellectual fortitude with respect to our religion?

Bhakti has been put off as less meaningful. The devotion exemplified by Sri Radha or Mirabai is obsolete for some people today. The reverence that devotional singing has, the energy of *kathak*, the essence of scriptural storytelling and the power of meditation are minimally appreciated. Most of these forms of devotion are hardly focused on, much less showcased, by Hindu organizations. While art appreciation has been on the rise with the younger generations, this rise is not mirrored in organized activity. Emphasis on younger Hindus' demonstrat-



ing their religiosity through dance, music and painting—skills which require patience and attention to detail—is very important, as is developing an appreciation for talent. Our scriptures make clear references to the significance of such expressions of bhakti.

Secondly, *jnana* yoga highlights an intellectual means of attaining oneness with God. A high percentage of our South

Asian community pursue college and graduate degrees—evidence that, professionally, this is an important goal. Yet, compelling opportunities for the pursuit of religious/spiritual knowledge are hard to find. Many religious events are organized with the primary goal of gaining or exchanging knowledge, albeit at a superficial level. If a young adult wants to take this task on alone, he has a major hurdle: language. English translations that are unbiased hardly exist on the major philosophies of Hinduism. With the array and depth of topics, there is a sense of under-qualification when young adults attempt to face the arcane treatises. Using multimedia, efforts must be made to share Hindu concepts and philosophies with younger audiences today.

Providing an outlet for young adults to engage in bhakti, *jnana*, and karma yoga is of utmost importance. The harmony that these three paths provide allows an individual to stay inspired and, more importantly, balanced. While I can hardly attribute my involvement in community activities to my sickness in college, I can definitely say that focusing too much on one aspect of Hindu expression—serving others—may have burned me out for a period of time. In my opinion, to re-ignite the interest of young Hindus in Hinduism, we must re-ignite the importance of our multifaceted approach to practicing Hinduism.

VARUN MEHTA, 26, is a marketing executive for a Houston, Texas, hospice and national president of the Hindu Students Association.

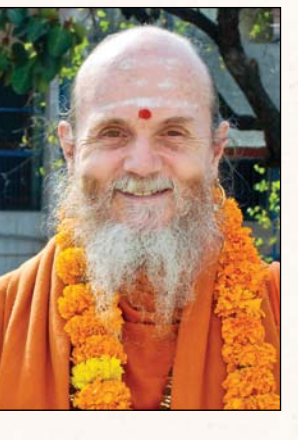


# Practice Makes Perfect

Five core disciplines for bringing our inner perfection into our intellectual, emotional and instinctive nature

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

“PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT” IS CERTAINLY A COMMONLY used phrase. Normally it refers to how we can acquire a skill that we do not have. For example, let’s say we type twenty words a minute with two index fingers. We make a decision to improve that skill and attend a typing class for six months, practicing every day. We master the skill of typing with all ten fingers, without looking at the keyboard, at an average speed of fifty words a minute! Our practice made our typing more perfect.



When this concept is applied to efforts in our spiritual life, it takes on a different meaning. This is because our inner essence, our soul nature, is already perfect. Our practice, or self effort, is to bring that inner perfection into our outer intellectual, emotional and instinctive nature. Thus we could modify the adage to be “practice manifests perfection.”

Swami Ranganathananda (1908–2005) of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission expressed this idea beautifully in an article we published in 1999 on medical ethics. He stated that the Hindu view of man “is that his essential, real nature is the atman or Self, which is immortal, self-luminous, the source of all power, joy and glory. Everything that helps in the manifestation of the divinity of the soul is beneficial and moral, and everything that obstructs this inner unfoldment is harmful and immoral.”

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of HINDUISM TODAY, gave a succinct description of our divine nature: “Deep inside we are perfect this very moment, and we have only to discover and live up to this perfection to be whole. We have taken birth in a physical body to grow and evolve into our divine potential. We are inwardly already one with God. Our religion contains the knowledge of how to realize this oneness and not create unwanted experiences along the way.”

In giving talks on the idea of how we can grow and evolve into our divine potential, I frequently use the analogy of dance. I ask the audience, “What is most needed for a youth to become good at Hindu classical dance?” Invariably, many state the answer that I have in mind: “Practice!” Reading books about dance won’t make you a good dancer. Nor will attending classes without practicing what you have learned. Regular practice is needed to make the body limber and master the many movements, positions, gestures and expressions. Likewise, to grow and evolve into our divine potential—to manifest our inner perfection in our outer intellectual and instinctive nature—requires regular practice.

A core practice that I recommend focusing on first is daily worship in the home shrine, preferably before dawn. Every Hindu home should have a place of worship. It may be as simple as a shelf with pictures of God or it can be an entire room dedicated to worship and meditation. Many families have a spiritual guide or guru and display

his or her picture in the shrine. If you are living away from home, such as at a university, a single photo may have to do. In this sacred space we light a lamp, ring a bell and pray daily. The most devout hold a formal worship ritual, or *atmartha puja*. This regular daily worship is called *upasana*. Residents go to the shrine for blessings before leaving for work or school. At other times one may sit in the shrine to pray, chant the names of God, sing devotional songs, read from scripture or meditate. The home shrine is also an excellent place to recenter oneself through prayer and reflection when emotionally upset.

A second expression of Hindu worship is *utsava*, holy days, observing the same day each week as a holy day and celebrating the major festival days through the year. On their weekly holy day, the family clean and decorate the home altar, attend the nearby temple and observe a fast. To make such weekly visits practical, Hindus seek to live within a day’s journey of a temple. Those who do not live close enough to a temple to visit weekly go as often as they can and do their best to attend the major festivals.

The temple is a sacred building, revered as the home of God. This is because of its mystical architecture, consecration and the continuous daily worship, or *puja*, performed thereafter. *Puja* is performed by qualified priests, invoking the Deity by chanting Sanskrit verses from scripture and making successive offerings which conclude with *arati*—the waving of an oil lamp in front of the Deity while bells are rung loudly. The Deity image, or *murti*, is especially sacred. It is through the *murti* that the presence and power of the Deity is felt by devotees who attend the *puja* for blessings and grace.

A third expression of Hindu worship is pilgrimage, or *tirthayatra*. At least once each year, a journey is made for darshan of holy persons, temples and places, ideally away from one’s local area. During this sojourn, God, Gods and gurus become the singular focus of life. All worldly matters are set aside. Thus pilgrimage provides a complete break from one’s usual day-to-day concerns. Special prayers are kept in mind, and penance or some form of sacrifice is part of the process. Actually, the preparation is as important as the pilgrimage itself. In the days or weeks before a *tirthayatra*, devotees perform spiritual disciplines such as decreasing the intake of heavier foods while increasing lighter foods, fasting one day a week, reading from scripture each night before sleep, and on weekends doubling the time usually spent in religious practices.

These three forms of worship—daily *puja*, holy days and pilgrimage—help us to manifest our inner perfection in our outer nature. A



ARTISTICALLY ADAPTED FROM PHOTO BY SRI NARAYANI PEEDAM

fourth aspect of Hinduism that can be embraced as a core practice is dharma, or virtuous living, living an unselfish life of duty and good conduct, which includes atoning for misconduct. One learns to be selfless by thinking of others first, being respectful to parents, elders and swamis, following divine law—especially *ahimsa*, which is mental, emotional and physical noninjuriousness toward all beings. An important focus for upholding dharma is to uphold the ten ethical restraints, or *yamas*. The first restraint, *ahimsa*, is the foremost. The others are: *satya*, truthfulness; *asteya*, nonstealing; *brahmacharya*, sexual purity; *kshama*, patience; *dhriti*, steadfastness; *daya*, compassion; *arjava*, honesty, straightforwardness; *mitahara*, moderate appetite and vegetarianism; and *shaucha*, purity.

Our fifth practice is the observance of traditional rites of passage, called *samskaras*. At these crucial ceremonies, an individual receives the blessings of God, Gods, guru, family and community as he or she commences a new phase of life. The first major *samskara* is *namakarana*, the name-giving rite, which also marks formal entry into a particular sect of Hinduism. It is performed 11 to 41 days after birth. At this time, guardian devas are assigned to see the child through life. *Annaprashana*, the first feeding of solid food, is held at about six months. *Vidyarambha* marks the beginning of formal education, when a boy or girl ceremoniously writes the first letter of the alphabet in a tray of uncooked rice. *Vivaha* is the rite of marriage, an elaborate and joyous ceremony in which the *homa* fire is central. *Antyeshthi*, the funeral rite, guiding a soul in its transition to inner worlds, includes preparation of the body, cremation, bone-gathering, dispersal of ashes and home purification.

These five practices are referred to as the *pancha nitya karmas*, “five eternal practices,” by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who

**Dance and spirituality:** Dancers reach the pinnacle of their craft by three things: practice, practice, practice. Similarly, spiritual progress comes through following the disciplines of our path.

notes, “We could say that they are an amalgam of all the counsel of the *Vedas* and *Agamas* to guide daily and yearly religious life. These five obligatory religious practices are simple and applicable for all. Study them and put them into practice in your own life.”

- ❖ *Upasana*, worship
- ❖ *Utsava*, holy days
- ❖ *Tirthayatra*, pilgrimage
- ❖ *Dharma*, virtuous living
- ❖ *Samskaras*, sacraments

These five duties, faithfully performed, are powerful tools to help us grow and evolve into our divine potential. Many Hindus go one step further in their striving by receiving initiation, known as *diksha*, from a qualified priest or guru. *Mantra diksha* is the primary initiation, the empowerment of a specific mantra as a personal *sadhana*, and the assignment to chant it as a daily practice for a minimum number of repetitions, such as 108. A second *diksha* is initiation to perform a specific form of *puja*, and the commitment to perform it daily in the home shrine.

In Hinduism, it is not enough to just be—or to wait for grace. The most devout know that each life on Earth is an opportunity for advancement and therefore take advantage of the many tools their faith provides. Following these five traditional observances brings forth, day by day, the perfection that lies, waiting, within each of us.



## LETTERS

### Great Festival Articles

Thank you for such unique coverage on Hindu customs, culture and more ("15 Hindu Festivals," Apr/May/June 2010). The articles are also a condensed history of the people of Bharat. They clearly describe their everyday life based on dharma, the universal love and life leading to peace and goodwill. The what, when and how of various festivals, celebrations, prayers, avatars and more are covered. The articles are small enough for easy reading but informative enough to show how the ancients lived according to practices developed by rishis over thousands of years for an ideal and fulfilling life. Unfortunately, foreign invaders with lower and corrupted values mistakenly introduced their own lower civilizational standards based on greed, power and wealth accumulation, which over time resulted in the demoralization of today's Hindu society. It is time for Hindus to understand and appreciate this fact and go back to dharma. The need to drop superficial barriers created as a result of generations of foreign rule is becoming more acute over time.

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### Sita Sings the Blues

It was very disappointing to read Lavina Melwani's fawning review of Nina Paley's "Sita Sings the Blues" (Oct/Nov/Dec 2010). This work can be said to be a good example of a bad American trait of petty self-absorption in elevating herself to the position of the revered and self-sacrificing Sita, and then bringing down Rama as an example of a wife-abandoning husband. Paley's work's puerile superficiality and Melwani's uncritical review is bad enough. It adds insult to injury for a Hindu to have to read this in a magazine for Hindus dedicated to Hindu issues.

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There has been some criticism of the animated movie "Sita Sings the Blues." It is not, in my opinion, a children's movie. I say this because this film delves into such topics as spousal abandonment. I wish to clarify the misuse of a term that I hear often: *religious fundamentalist*. For example, I am a fundamentalist Hindu in the sense that I hold the faith dear to me. I incorporate my spiritual and religious beliefs into my everyday life and hope that my words and my actions are a positive reflection on the path that I follow. Those people who have made threats against Nina Paley are not fundamentalist Hindus. They are known as religious fanatics. What is

most shameful about religious fanatics is that these zealots often violate the very teachings of the faith they claim to be a part of.

"Sita Sings the Blues" is a fascinating animated movie. Nina Paley tells the story of Rama and Sita from the perspective of a woman (Ms. Paley) who can relate to Sita and Sita's trials and tribulations to prove Her (Goddess Sita's) purity to Lord Rama. Ms. Paley intertwines her own story of spousal abandonment in this movie.

"Sita Sings the Blues" is nothing short of an intense theological exercise. It is a movie that will give a person quite a bit of food for thought. I think every ashram, and every college that has an Eastern Religious Studies program, should have this DVD in their library. Needless to say I shall incorporate "Sita Sings the Blues" into my discussions about Hinduism.

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With a sad heart, I am reading the Oct/Nov/Dec 2010 issue of HINDUISM TODAY, to which I have subscribed for many years. I always had great respect for your illustrious publication, as you always strived to defend Hindu thought and beliefs in a Western society, providing balanced, insightful articles. However, as a devotee of Lord Ram, I am deeply saddened and offended that you chose such an inappropriate image from "Sita Sings the Blues" for the cover. I also find your unflattering article on the topic biased, and I feel you do not make enough effort in the article to correct misrepresentations about *Ramayan*. What pains me most is that this happened in the very publication that in the past has fought such misrepresentations of the Hindu faith.

VINAY AGGARWAL  
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If someone from another country, with a different culture, does something when in your house that in your culture is considered rude or inappropriate, but you know they didn't mean anything by what they did and that they were operating by the norms of their society, would you still choose to be offended? I think Nina Paley's actions have to be viewed in terms of her intent in order to determine whether there was any real insult. In her culture, sacred texts are not untouchable, and are regularly reinterpreted by people, which is pretty typical of the way the *Ramayana* has been historically treated, with no single version existing but, in fact, many.

It's totally missing the mark to say that she insulted Sita. She clearly sympathized with

Sita and even identified with Her, as she perceived her own circumstances to be similar to Sita's. There is no challenge from Nina to Sita, but to Ram's integrity as a husband and a man, and she makes that challenge pretty dead on. And indeed, many people in India have as well. Why should it be inappropriate for her to do so because her skin is white?

JAMES NIGH  
VIA FACEBOOK

I sympathize with people who are hurt and offended by what feels like an attack on their faith, and I appreciate those who are trying to approach this rationally. Sometimes those two views are very difficult to reconcile. I'm Hindu, and a hereditary priestess in a line of priests and priestesses, educated in rites, scriptures and philosophy by my parents. In my tradition, critical discussion of the sacred text is commonplace. Hinduism has a strong scriptural tradition of commentary (e.g. *Upanishads*); and there is often virulent disagreement among scholars and priests.

There are many versions of the *Ramayana*. I simply see "Sita Sings the Blues" as another one. The commentary is in a more contemporary form. Ms. Paley has studied the *Ramayana* like any good scholar, and now is trying to make sense of it through her own experience.

I understand that many Hindus find it offensive. I'm not one of them. I think the *Ramayana* is strong, wise and ancient enough that it can take some modern commentary without crumbling. I think it is enriched and can offer greater wisdom by being flexible; much like Hinduism itself, it can play many roles in the manifestation of divine wisdom.

In order to improve ourselves, as people, as cultures, as faiths, we have to think critically. We have to see that there are areas we can improve. We have to see that there is more than one way to understand something. To think critically is, to me, an act of love.

There are things in my sacred texts that I struggle to understand and come to terms with. My own relationship, as a woman, with Sita and the *Ramayana* has been uneasy most of my life. I have talked with many swamis, pandits and lay Hindus and non-Hindus alike. Insight has come from all sources. Ironically, it was Nina Paley's movie that helped me get over my dislike of Sita, and to see the character and what She represented (to me) in a compassionate way. I am not alone in being a Hindu/Indian woman who finds the character of Sita challenging.

Hinduism has a long tradition of debate and critical thinking. Some of that is satire. We cannot understand ourselves as Hindus, Indians, humans without some critical thought. Hinduism is diverse. The *Rama-*

*yana* is not only scripture, but also a verbal folk tradition. Ram *leela* is done in every village; it is different everywhere, and I have seen many that incorporate satire and sharp social and political criticism. I have seen it make politicians and priests squirm. It is of the people and for the people. Would anyone say that those villagers do not have the right to reinterpret the *Ramayana*? I don't think so.

SAUMYA ARYA HAAS  
VIA FACEBOOK

### Hindu History Lessons

I am 19 years old, and I am studying to be a teacher. I saw a link to the website with your Hindu history lessons for middle-schoolers. Thank you for such a great work, which makes the subject easy to understand. School books here in Norway don't have all of this information about India, and most of what they do have is incorrect. Being proud of my religion and culture, I want to teach kids the right thing.

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### Treatment of Monkeys

Is the persecution of monkeys in Mauritius something that Hindus should fight against? After all, Hanuman is revered by Hindus. Should we get together and tell the government in Mauritius to stop ill treatment of them, sending them to labs abroad to be tortured and killed? Hindus should have a say and persuade the government to stop this barbaric trade.

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### Thank You, Hinduism Today

I learned of your inspiring monastery when a guest of the ashram I am living at left a copy of HINDUISM TODAY in the library. Even though the copy was eight years old, I enjoyed it so much, and more copies have come since. The selection of news stories of all kinds, written with excellence and sympathy, brought me a sense of connection to other Hindus, which I have been lacking, since reading news of the world is discouraged in the ashram. I was especially inspired by the article "Teaching Children to Forge a Peaceful

Future" (Jul/Aug/Sep 2003). I believe in right action in the face of tragedy perpetrated by those who act with *himsa*.

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### Corrections

✓ *Makara Sankranti takes place when the Sun moves from Sagittarius to Capricorn, not from Capricorn to Sagittarius, as incorrectly given in "Global Dharma: Ganga Sagar's Shifting Shores" (Jul/Aug/Sep 2010).*

✓ *In "Holi" (Apr/May/June 2010), we incorrectly refer to the legend of "Holika and her brother Prahlad." Rather, it should read, "Holika and her nephew Prahlad."*

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

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Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA  
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351  
or visit: [www.hinduismtoday.com/letters](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/letters)

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

## Perceiving That We Are One Spiritual Family

### How generosity helps reach hearts and souls

I AM A HINDU TO THE CORE, HAVE BEEN my whole life, and for many lives before that," explains David Wiekrykas who was born in the US 55 years ago of Lithuanian ancestry.

Since he was a child, David has been blessed with profound spiritual experiences. When he was 13, he had a life-transforming "lightning experience" one day as he was walking the hallways of his school. Later, having become an auto worker at General Motors in Detroit, "I had a vision of the Divine Mother right in the factory, among the deafening noise and hubbub. I was really taken aback!" Today, he has come to be known as a spiritual light among his co-workers and bosses, who often come to him for upliftment.

David lives alone because years ago he vowed to be a *brahmachari* the rest of his life. "I wanted to dedicate my life to God," he says. His world today is one of daily inner experiences and rare insights.

In explaining his connection with HINDUISM TODAY, David has to go back to the 1940's when on two occasions his paramaguru, Paramahansa Yogananda, met Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva), the magazine's founder. "The

power of those meetings established a deep rapport that still vibrates today." Later, Gurudeva met David's guru, Roy Eugene

Davis, a direct disciple of Yogananda and head of the Center for Spiritual Awareness.

"I saw the two of them as great and rare old souls who had known each other before. They remained in constant touch thereafter. And the electricity from my own meetings with Gurudeva feeds my soul to this day. We are one spiritual family."

Since David was introduced to HINDUISM TODAY by his guru in 1992, he has read every word of every article of every issue. "HINDUISM TODAY not only tells about the

Hindu renaissance, it is helping to bring it about. The information it contains is the stuff of life, it is the power of creation, like everything Hindu. Because my guru introduced me to it, I feel his presence in it. He

speaks to me through the words. There is no difference between us. HINDUISM TODAY is my resource, my guru and my own voice at the same time."

David has generously made the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a



**"I am not much of a traveler. Hinduism Today is the next best thing to going to India."**

part of Hindu Heritage Endowment, a beneficiary in his estate plan.

"The magazine is getting the message out there at a time when the world needs it most, and I can't think of a better cause to support," he said.

Please consider helping create an abundant future for HINDUISM TODAY by including the Production Fund in your estate plan. This makes for a powerful gift that will empower our magazine and greatly benefit future generations. Ask for our Planned Giving

Toolkit by contacting one of our monastic staff at 1-808-634-5407 or [hhe@hindu.org](mailto:hhe@hindu.org). Visit [www.hheonline.org/productionfund](http://www.hheonline.org/productionfund) and subscribe to the Production Fund e-newsletter at: [www.gurudeva.org/email-news](http://www.gurudeva.org/email-news)



## QUOTES & QUIPS

The vast tree of Truth yields fruits when you nurture it.

**Mahatma Gandhi** (1869–1948)

Suppose a thorn has pierced a man's foot. He picks up another thorn to pull out the one hurting him. After extracting the first with the help of the second, he throws both away. One should use the thorn of knowledge to pull out the thorn of ignorance, then throw away both, and realize God directly. **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836–1886)

Amma has not created a particular path. Hinduism is the greatest book on life. Whatever Amma has done is all based on Hinduism. **Sakthi Amma**, head of the Narayani Peedam of Malaikodi, Tamil Nadu, India

The way to freedom is a way of silence—of silent resolve and silent service. **Sadhu Vaswani**, (1879–1966) founder the Sadhu Vaswani Mission

Love says, "I am everything." Wisdom says, "I am nothing." Between the two, my life flows. I express it by saying that I am both, and neither, and beyond both. **Nisargadatta Maharaj** (1897–1981), Hindu sage

Children are lamps to be lit, not vessels to be filled.

Free will is not free—it is a phenomenon bound by cause and effect—but there is something behind the will which is free. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863–1902)

The board rewrote the definition of science, so that it is no longer limited to the search for natural explanations of phenomena. *Associated Press, reporting on the Texas Board of Education*

I will do everything that I can as long as

I am president of the United States to remind the American people that we are one nation under God, and we may call that God different names, but we remain one nation. **Barack Obama**, President of the U.S., speaking at the White House on the anniversary of 9/11

In dogmatic religions, heretics are cast out not because they are wrong but because of the possibility that they are right.

Polar bears like snow. Bipolar bears sometimes do, and sometimes don't.

People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. **Steve Jobs**, founder and CEO of Apple, Inc.

### DID YOU KNOW?

## All the Gold in the World

THERE IS REALLY NOT SO MUCH GOLD on Earth, if you get down to the numbers. This rare metal certainly looks ubiquitous—adorning tall monuments, wealthy women and sacred Hindu temples. But all the gold ever mined through history is estimated to fit in a cube measuring 21 meters on each side. Three-quarters of that was mined in the last hundred years.

The 15 tons used at the Sripuram temple, a fabulous amount, would form a cube with only 42 centimeters on each side—the volume of a large microwave oven.

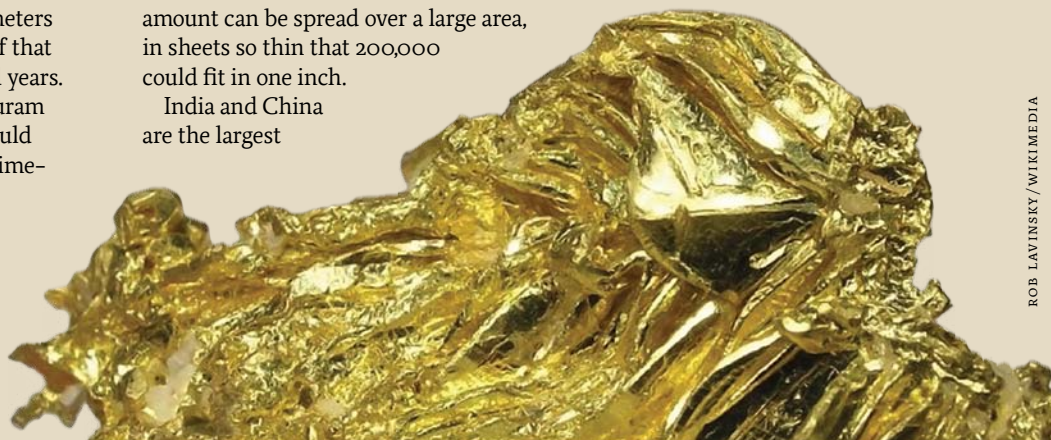
Part of the reason for gold's rarity is that it is a cosmic import. No gold nugget can be synthesized in the depths of our planet. Creating new gold requires a furnace as

powerful as an exploding supernova star. Earth's oceans have gold dissolved in the saltwater, an estimated 15,000 tons; but there is no viable process to extract it.

Gold is one of the heaviest naturally occurring atoms, highly dense and ductile. That means that even a small amount can be spread over a large area, in sheets so thin that 200,000 could fit in one inch.

India and China are the largest

global consumers today. In India, gold is the most noble of the five metals that form the *panchaloka*, an alloy used to create items for Hindu temples, including the *murti* of the main Deity. It is also used to create *kavachams*, gold armor for the Gods.



ROB LAVINSKY / WIKIMEDIA

Andrew Delany

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Jewish homes have a mezuzah, a small scroll with scripture attached to the doorway for blessings. Some Christians in New York have been doing it, too. Asked why he did it, one responded, "Well, it's good karma." **Brian Hallas**, Brooklyn resident

There is nothing amazing in the world. Your ignorance shows when you find it so. It all happened long, long ago. What can be amazing? I am you and you are me. I

am eternal, birthless, deathless, changeless, secondless. **Satguru Yogaswami**, (1862–1964) Sri Lankan mystic

Be careful of your thoughts; they may become words at any moment.

Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality. **Nikos Kazantzakis**, (1883–1957) Greek novelist

We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us happy is something to be enthusiastic about. **Albert Einstein** (1879–1955)

As long as there is searching, Parasiva has not been found, for searching is two, while It is one. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY

### BASICS OF HINDUISM

## Maya, Illusion and Ultimate Reality

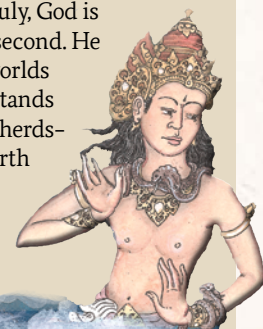
HINDU SAGES HAVE INVESTIGATED the nature of existence since time immemorial, going deeper than any other religion or philosophical school. One of the finds is *maya*, the shifting apparent reality that is sometimes, simplistically, called an illusion.

All of existence is *maya*, God's mirific energy. Only God is absolutely real. The universe that emanated from God is relatively real—which means it is impermanent, subject to change and dissolution, and experienced differently as the soul matures. This does not imply that *maya* is nonexistent, or a mere illusion,

for it is entirely real when experienced in ordinary consciousness. Its existence is required to lead us to God.

The universe is born, evolves and dissolves in cycles much as the seasons come and go. These cycles are inconceivably immense, ending in *mahapralaya* when the universe is re-absorbed. All creation, including time and space, dissolve in God. This is His ultimate grace—the evolution of all souls is perfect and complete as they lose individuality and return to Him. Then God exists alone until He again issues forth creation—*maya* happens once more.

The Vedas state, "Truly, God is One; there can be no second. He alone governs these worlds with His powers. He stands facing beings. He, the herdsman, after bringing forth all worlds, reabsorbs them at the end of time."

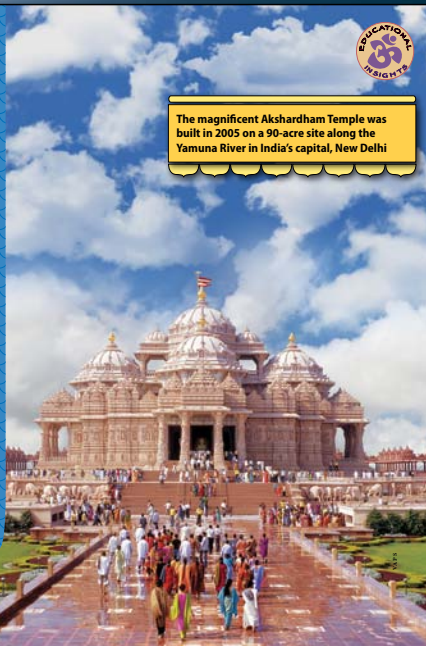


I. WAYAN MARYA



21<sup>st</sup> Century India

India was suppressed by centuries of Muslim and British foreign rule. But after independence in 1947, its founders succeeded in welding together the ancient land into a strong, united, modern nation. The Hindu religion survived intact and thrives today in the world's largest democracy.



The magnificent Akshardham Temple was built in 2005 on a 90-acre site along the Yamuna River in India's capital, New Delhi

## Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight is the fifth and final chapter in our series on Hindu history for use in US primary and secondary schools. In these few pages, we give a broad overview of India since independence. Reporting on recent history is always a challenge since historians lack the chronological and emotional distance to impartially judge key people, trends and events. But clearly, the foremost accomplishment is that India has remained a united, democratic country since 1947. It escaped the fate of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and neighboring Pakistan, each of which split up. It is also notable that modern India continues to be

JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2011 HINDUISM TODAY 1-1

what India has always been: a deep source of wisdom and practical spirituality valued by societies around the world. This lesson was written and designed by the editorial staff of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Northridge.

Academic reviewers: Dr. Klaus Klostermaier, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jeffrey D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; Dr. Michael K. Ward, Visiting Lecturer in History, California State University, Northridge. Educational Consultant: Justin Stein, PhD student, University of Toronto, and former middle school teacher in New York.

In this Lesson: *The World's Largest Democracy Is Born; Building a Unified Nation; Hindu Metaphysics, the Seven Chakras; Hindu Ideas, the Impact Today*

In writing the fifth lesson, we at HINDUISM TODAY found that little appreciation has been given modern India's founders for their genius, skill and courage in creating the world's largest democracy out of the ruins of Colonial India. Between 1947 and today, India stayed united as astounding progress occurred: the life expectancy doubled; percent of world income doubled; the annual national rate of growth more than doubled; poverty was reduced by half; and literacy increased six-fold. These figures resulted from successful nation-building. To a significant extent, India's unity over these last sixty years has sustained Hinduism's unity.

"Thanks to the expertise of its authors, Chapter Five is a comprehensive and well-written piece, covering a lot of ground. Quite a service to the younger members of the Hindu community."

Klaus Klostermaier, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Religion, University of Manitoba, Canada

All five chapters (along with lesson plans) are available for class use as printed booklets or as downloadable PDFs at [www.hinduismtoday.com/education](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/education).

Single copies, US\$1.50 30 copies, \$15.00 Cartons of 300: \$99 Phone: 877-255-1510; [minimela@hindu.org](mailto:minimela@hindu.org); [www.minimela.com](http://www.minimela.com)

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## Hindu History Lesson Series Is Completed!

Five years ago, Hindus in California found out just how poorly our religion is portrayed in that state's history books for sixth grade (the only year when Hinduism is taught). They also discovered that, despite a great deal of work and expression of concern to the State Board of Education, fixes for the books were not going to come easily. At the State's adoption stage, the books were already finished; so only minor changes were allowed. While some progress was made, the entire approach needed to be revamped to bring to the presentation of Hinduism the accuracy and respect accorded other religions in the same books. Thus was born our five-year effort to write an accurate history of India and Hinduism for sixth-grade American school students. The five 16-page lessons will soon be published as a book.



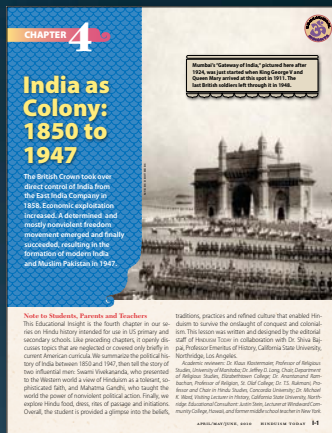
Origins of Hinduism; Hindu Beliefs & Scriptures; Hinduism in Practice



Surviving a Time of Trial; Music, Art, Dance and Architecture



Of Kings & Prosperity; Society, Science and the Arts; Leading a Sacred Life



British Rule's Mixed Blessings; The Challenge of Ideas; Rites of Passage

## FROM THE AGAMAS

## On the Importance of Sacred Sound

Mantras "should be treated with utmost diligence and sincerity"

The following text is from chapter three of the knowledge section of Raurava Agama, "Transmission of Scriptures." The chapter discusses gurus, mantras, mandalas (sacred diagrams), tattvas (categories of existence) and lokas (the various worlds). Following is the section on mantra, a sound, word or phrase endowed with special power.

SIVA TATVA IS AN EVER-EXISTING PRINCIPLE. IT IS never created afresh. It is in identical existence with Ishvara. It is the causal source for the origin, sustenance and dissolution of all other *tattvas*. Having heard the exact nature of such Siva *tattva*, the sages, being desirous of attaining oneness with the Eternal Existence (e.g., Siva), bowed down before Ruru, the son of Bhṛigu and spoke these words:

"O, most celebrated sage among the knowers of the *Agamas*! How was this *Agama* brought down to us through continued transmission? In this *Agama*, many gurus have been mentioned. What is the total number of such gurus? How many mantras and how many mandalas have been enumerated? How many *tattvas* and worlds are there? Kindly instruct us on these details as they really are."

[Regarding mantras, Ruru replied]: "After observing that the creation done by Brahma is associated with the ever-going phenomenon of birth and death, these mantras assumed the distinct forms energized by the rays of Sivasakti. With these forms assumed by them, the mantras are guiding and guarding the aspirants. In these mantras, the supreme Lord called Mantra Rajeshvara, who is eternally free from the limiting bonds, presents Himself in a concealed way. Wishing for the welfare of all the worlds, Lord Siva formulated these mantras and revealed them. For the welfare of the worlds, the Supreme Lord brought into existence the everlasting benefits to be accomplished through mantras and yajnas (sacrifice).

"For the benefit of pure souls (gurus) who are intent on attaining total identity with the mantras, the systematic process of mandala-worship was formulated by Him. There are eight primary mandalas (diagrams) which belong to the system of secret science. Apart from these, there are hundreds of mandalas, the details of which have been set forth well in this *Agama*.

"In the rituals performed with mandalas, Lord Siva becomes known as Mandali, in view of the fact that He occupies these mandalas and presents Himself there eternally. These great mandalas are worshiped by the sages, celestial beings, asuras, human beings and by all those who are desirous of attaining final liberation and bliss. The king of Vidyeshvaras and Mandaleshas and those who have manifested with elegance and greatness as the unfailing associates of Mantreshvaras and Mandalehsas present themselves in these mandalas through the appropriate mantras. Verily, they are of the nature of these mantras. They are the souls of these mantras. Even for the highly enlightened sages, it is not possible to give the exact number of such mantras.

"There are as many mantras as there are Rudras, Devas, Rakshasas,



Siva as Aum: Raruava Agama explains the nature of mantras and their origin in Lord Siva, depicted here with Sivalinga and Aum

Yakshas and Maheshvaras. Their exact number cannot be known. They have been designed and composed in a language suitable to each division of the Earth and other worlds. They have been associated with relevant seed letters and words, which are divine, effulgent and vibrant. These mantras have the power of knowing all. They have the power of reaching all the places and all the divisions of time. They are pure. They are in identical existence with those who have attained the power of knowing all.

"They are not to be analyzed and examined either with the doctrines of *mimamsa* or by those who are with insignificant and erroneous knowledge. Keeping the *Agama* as the most authoritative text for the unfailing validity of these facts, the mantras should be treated with utmost diligence and sincerity by those who contemplate on the goodness and welfare of all beings."

DR. S. P. SABHARATHNAM SIVACHARYAR, 67, of the Adisaiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Silpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the revered *Raurava Agama*.

The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, shruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 BCE), Bible New Testament (100 CE), Koran (630 CE) or Zend Avesta (600 BCE). The oldest portions of the Vedas may date back as far as 6,000 BCE. The Saiva Agamas are also ancient, but dating is uncertain.





NARAYANI PEEDAM

Sakthi Amma

# A GODDESS NURTURES Her Golden Empire

**G**OLD—NO OTHER METAL evokes as much speculation and awe. But in Sri Mahalakshmi Narayani Temple, Vellore, founder Sakthi Amma connects gold with the divine, not the mundane. Here the Goddess of eternal abundance is worshiped with fervor, zeal—and with gold, creating successive waves of prosperity that support a vast network of social services, earth-friendly projects and pilgrimage facilities.



Going against the current of today's media-crazed world, the Golden Temple had so far avoided the news' spotlight. HINDUISM TODAY received unprecedented access to Sri-puram for this rare report.

BY RAJIV MALIK, SRIPURAM

AROUND THE ANCIENT REGION OF VEL-lore, Hinduism has historically flourished. The city, considered one of the oldest settlements in India, lies almost equidistant between Thiruvannamalai and Tirupati, two temples of repute and legend. But since 2007, a new place of worship has quickly risen as a top pilgrimage destination. Sripuram is the most visible achievement of the Sri Narayani Peedam, a dynamic organization led by the spiritual leader called Sakthi Amma, a young, self-proclaimed avatar of the Goddess.

It is easy to find the Sri Mahalakshmi Narayani Golden Temple, as Sripuram is officially called. Just look for a temple completely clad in pure, shining gold, a magnificent edifice at the center of a sprawling 100-acre complex.

The temple was consecrated on August 27, 2007, after six years of construction. The chief architect was Subbaya Sthapati from Kanchipuram, an expert in Vastu (the sacred art of Hindu temple and home building) who had previously designed several temples in Tamil Nadu. At any given time during construction, 800 to 1,000 artisans, sculptors, masons and craftsman worked on the site.

The main structure is made of concrete. On top of it, traditional temple materials were applied, such as copper, gold and special woods, crafted according to Sakthi



Amma offers abhishekam to Narayani

Amma's instructions. Amma, the Peedam's charismatic 34-year-old founder, was deeply involved in the design of the new temple. "Amma is the architect behind all that you see in this temple. Amma is a great artist herself, and provided plenty of drawings for this project," says Suresh Babu, manager of the temple, who was in charge of the construction. [Devotees of Sakthi Amma refer to him using the feminine pronoun, thus honoring the presence of the Goddess in him over the masculine bodily form.] Suresh Babu adds, "We are tools of this whole creation done by Her. You can see artistic work at each and every place here."

Art and harmony are highly regarded in Sripuram, as are the artists themselves.

"Amma said the temple should be made only through the artisans, so no machines were used for the ornamentations. Everything done in gold plating or metal work is hand laid," Suresh Babu explains.

In the technique used to add metal to the structure, several tons of 800-gauge copper sheets were partially sculpted and molded to the concrete. Finishing work was then done on site: nine to fifteen layers of gold foil, made locally from bullion bars weighing as much as a kilo, were pasted over the copper. "It was challenging work. We have done the gold plating in such a way that even the copper will not react. We have seen this work elsewhere also in some ancient temples in which the gold-plated *kalasha* is still in

good shape even after three hundred years. The whole procedure is very simple and is a traditional one, but time consuming. Six years is a short period for this kind of project. We worked day and night," Babu recalls.

The herculean effort created a modern marvel drawing 25,000 to 30,000 visitors each day and more on weekends. Admission is free. During festivals and on other special days, up to 100,000 are estimated to visit the golden temple. By comparison, the daily average for Tirupati stands around 50,000.

What attracts such multitudes? Stories about the opulence and awe of the temple travel far, of course; but pilgrims also find verdant surroundings, a well-kept structure and an ambiance of peace. "I liked the



## Many splendors at Mahalakshmi's palace



(Clockwise from above) The highest form of art in India has always been found at temples, and Sripuram continues this tradition with exquisite South Indian craftsmanship. Long, beautifully decorated walkways with fountains lead to the temple, helping the devotees forget worldly thoughts and leave the bedlam of modern life behind. Sripuram gleams at sunrise while devotees circumambulate the main mandapam.





temple so much; the atmosphere is calm and beautiful," said Shivani Bomzen, 18, from Darjeeling, during her first visit. "This is one of the cleanest temples I have seen in India," adds Rohit Iyer, 19, a student at the Vellore Institute of Technology.

Stories of visions, healings and mystical experiences draw people from afar. Madi-vanen, who owns a beauty salon in Malaysia, is on her second visit. "Last year when I came I developed a very special bond with the Deity here," she shares. "This time I came to ask for blessings to heal some of my relatives who are not well."

Following the directions of Amma, the temple became a unique structure, only partially based on Agamic architecture. Amma carefully planned the devotees' experience, including an elaborate way to reach the sanctum.

The long path toward the temple begins with a straight stone walkway adorned with water fountains, sculptures and *kolams* etched on the pavement. It clearly impresses the mind that this is a special place, and that the world—in its most mundane, polluted and noisy form—has been left behind. Arriving at the end of the initial wide corridor, the pilgrim looks out upon carefully manicured surroundings (*photo on the right*). Just ahead are three archways. The one in the center, leading directly to the temple, is a shortcut only open on special occasions. The entrance on the left takes one to the 1,500-meter-long Star Path, a creation of Amma that surrounds the Sripuram temple. The gate on the right is where people exit after circumambulating and visiting the holy shrine.

The Star Path has the form of a *shatkona*, or six-pointed star. The intent is to emulate the ideals of a traditional pilgrimage. All those who want to see the Goddess and ask for Her blessings will prepare themselves, enjoying the journey as an integral part of the religious experience. Amma explained, "Generally, when you go to a temple, you go straight to the sanctum through a few *go-purams* and *prakarams*. But Sripuram is not like that. While devotees walk through the Star Path, on both sides they can see spiritual quotes from Amma in many languages. They answer common questions, 'Why does one need bhakti?' 'What is the point of devotion?' 'Why act according to dharma?' These quotes convey basic values of humanity."

The paths comprise a queue system that can hold five thousand people at once, with rest areas furnished with chairs and bathrooms.

The green surroundings have a soothing effect. Exquisite gardens and the many sculptures set the mood as devotees progress to the temple. The nearby hills, which can be seen from the path, are integral to the complex. Thirty thousand neem trees were planted on the nearby Kailashgiri hill, as part of a large forestation project initiated by Amma's organization.

Along the lengthy corridors of the Star Path, spirits are high and anticipation builds. The flow of pilgrims is orderly. Families talk to each other while walking and make new acquaintances. Most pilgrims are beautifully dressed, especially the women, who wear traditional saris. The rare few in Western clothing are politely taken to the nearby shops and encouraged to buy a sari or a dhoti

and kurta, or just anything less informal.

Most of the hosting is done by volunteers. "Our volunteers are well trained, and they handle people with a lot of calm," Suresh Babu tells us. "We have many devotees helping with tasks from hosting to even managing the temple. But Sripuram also has nearly 1,000 paid employees." Most of them work in areas unseen by the public.

After the long walk, pilgrims finally enter the temple. Some describe it as an overwhelming experience, others say they feel a sense of peace. One and a half metric tons of gold greet the pilgrim, covering every visible surface except the floor. The shining metal, valued at more than US\$70 million by 2010 prices, creates a stunning impression. Crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling add to the marvel and lead to the unmistakable conclusion: this is Mahalakshmi's palace.

While gold is often used in Hindu temples for its unique mystical properties (see sidebar on page 25), Agamic scriptures do not prescribe gilding the full temple but only specific parts of it. As in many other activities in this organization, Amma's insights and instructions took precedence over tradition.

The gold, Amma explains, is like the sugar coating of a pill. "People are materialistic these days. Gold will attract to the temple even the most materialistic person. After experiencing all this, Narayani's abundance, they can finally turn to more spiritual pursuits. The gold might attract them, but the values they learn here will make them better people, and that will change the world."

Finally—at the center of the star, inside what feels like the Holy Mother's heart of



NARAYANI PEEDAM

## The walk to the temple is in itself a form of worship



M. DEIVARAYA

(Clockwise from top) The main temple is surrounded by the six-pointed Star Path. A view from inside the mile-long covered pathway. Devotees stop to read inspiring religious messages along the way. At the start of Star Path, the central hallway leading directly to the temple (open only for special events) and at left the entry to the circuitous route that thousands follow each day.



M. DEIVARAYA



M. DEIVARAYA



gold—devotees see the Goddess and receive Her darshan.

The Deity at Sripuram is Goddess Mahalakshmi Narayani, an aspect of the Goddess Narayani, who, according to Amma, is the unification of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. He explains, "Narayani is the Supreme Goddess, 'Adi Parashakti,' as clearly explained in the 12th chapter of the *Devi Mahatmya*, the most authoritative scripture on the Goddess."

The name *Narayani* had been seldom used in recent centuries, and that mostly in Kerala. It would normally refer to any one of the three main Goddesses, not to a being comprising them all. Narayani is most commonly identified with Lakshmi, Vishnu's feminine counterpart, since Lord Narayana is another name for Vishnu, meaning "refuge of men."

To Sakthi Amma, this is not a new tradition. Goddess Narayani is eternal; She has been the consummation of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati since time immemorial. "Narayani is a mirror in which you can see the reflection of any of the three Devis you want to worship," says Amma. "Man does wrong when lacking strength, prosperity or wisdom. Each form of Narayani provides for one of these."

Sri Narayani's stone *murti* was also conceived and designed by Amma. The granite was quarried, brought to the temple site and carved under his careful supervision.

Worship of the Goddess is performed numerous times each day. Before dawn, at 4:30,

in a procession led by elephants and enlivened by the sound of resident *nadaswaram* players, devotees carry silver pots (*kalasham*) full of water to the sanctum. The priests, walking in the procession, chant mantras from the *Sama Veda*. The Deity is bathed with the water. Then follows a two-and-a-half-hour puja. At 8 am the temple is opened to the public. Food (*naivedyam*) is served to the Deity at noon, and seven *kala aratis* are done through the day at auspicious hours.

Rituals in Sripuram are partially inspired by traditional Agamic worship, as in most of South India. They also incorporate Amma's directions and a strong influence from the *Vedas*.

The Chief Priest, Ramasubramania Sharma, 58, is a renowned specialist in the *Sama Veda*. Ramana, as he is called, leads a team of fifty priests who are from various schools and two primary traditions, Vedic and Agamic.

"I initially came here to chant Vedic mantras during the *kumbhabhishekam*," explains Ramana, who was trained in Kumbhakonam. "It was Amma who gave me *diksha* (initiation) and empowered me to perform *pujas*."

In spite of their different training, the two groups of priests representing the *Agamas* and the *Vedas* work together. Ramana explains, "The Sivacharyas here perform pujas as per the *Aghorashivacharya Paddhati*, following the *Kamika Agama*. On the other hand, my pujas or chantings are based on the *Sama Veda*. Ours is an amalgamation of both traditions. Pujas performed by Amma also have a tantric element."

Pujas in Sripuram tend to be

simpler than those in the Peedam's other temples in the region. Though Sripuram is the crown jewel, the others are still active.

The first temple of what would become the Narayani Peedam organization was established in 1992, to house a *Swayambhu Sivalingam* that was discovered in fulfillment of a prophecy made by Amma.

A second temple, built over a period of four years and consecrated in 2001, is called Sri Narayani Temple—the first ever built for Goddess Narayani. At its *kumbhabhishekam*, the mantra of the Deity was collectively chanted one billion times by 750 priests over a period of nine days.

Later, to accommodate the huge crowds, Amma built the enormous Shanti Mandapam (Hall of Peace). There, devotees witness daily pujas to Goddess Sri Narayani performed by Amma himself. The blessed *tirtham* water that Amma sprinkles on the faithful after the ceremony is believed to heal ailments and impart blessings. "Many devotees have benefitted from the blessed *tirtham* water," Ramana testifies. "The water becomes powerful when Amma puts his hands on it. Through Amma's *tapas* it becomes charged with energy."

Sripuram might be the holy cynosure, but the Sri Narayani Peedam goes beyond the golden marvel. Widely popular, undeniably vibrant, it has a spiritual might that draws equally from tradition and the insights of Amma in an unorthodox but potent mix. Priest Ramana summarizes, "There are things that pertain to Devaloka and cannot be understood just by logic. The ways of a *siddha purusha* (perfected soul) are one such thing."

## Gold and silver's mystical effects

Scriptures in Hinduism originate from clairvoyant revelation or divine inspiration. With mystics as its de facto leaders, the Sanatana Dharma is revitalized anytime a legitimate guru or saint reaches into the inner worlds.

The founder of HINDUISM TODAY, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, had an unanticipated encounter with that process soon after the iconic *murti* of Kadavul Nataraja arrived at his Kauai monastery in 1973. To his third eye vision, a vast library with an array of great manuscripts was opened. It was the library of Lord Sub-

ramaniam, Siva's son.

In the visions that followed, the librarian—a tall, fine, elegantly robed, bearded man—would pull forth from one shelf or another great volumes and open and turn the pages to the proper place to be read. First to be transcribed were the *Lemurian Shastras*, later published as part of a book entitled *Lemurian Scrolls*. They describe the esoteric aspects of the inner workings of monasteries and temples, including the effect of gold, in a treatise written by an anonymous monk in the era of a remote *yuga*. Read an excerpt on the next page.



Amma blesses devotees with tirtham water



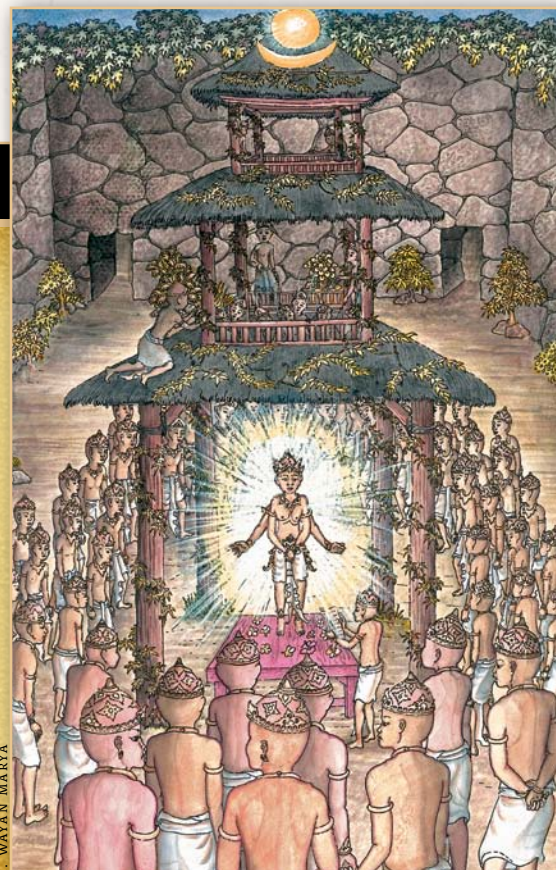
## The Shanti Mandapam is Vellore's conclave for the faithful

from the *Lemurian Shastras* by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

### Chapter 4 Stanza 56

We had a gold substance that came from the ground, and silver, too. Of this we made jewelry to decorate the physical body and make it look like that of the Deity and devas. This gold and silver could be seen, even in the World of the Gods, glowing. The people in the surrounding country side would dig it out of the mountains, find it in their rivers and streams and bring it to us. As was our custom, we kept one third of it in the temple and fashioned jewelry for our bodies from the

other two thirds. We prided ourselves in this skill, of which we had many. This gold and silver jewelry made by us carried the darshan from the monastery wherever it was taken. Walking through the monastery and temple, one could see large piles of gold and silver here and there, and in the World of the Gods each monastery and temple could be easily distinguished because of the vast quantities of gold and silver it contained. It glowed there as a marker of the destination point so that Deities and devas would know where to come.





## The Story of a Man Called Amma

**W**OMEN ARE NATURALLY INTUITIVE, transcending simple logic, so it is fitting that a Goddess' designs are beyond the grasp of mere reason. To select a man to manifest the works of the Goddess might seem puzzling, but the devout say that there could be no better choice. Sakthi Amma was born on January 3rd, 1976. Birth symbols on the baby's skin are said to have heralded his divinity, a *tilak* on the forehead along with a chakra and a conch on either sides of his chest—symbols associated with Goddess Lakshmi.

The child soon showed deep interest in spirituality. Dr. N. Balaji, Amma's brother and director of the Sri Narayani Hospital, recalls, "With his pocket money he used to buy pictures of Murugan, Ganesha and Balaji and build a small mound as a shrine. He did pujas, offering jaggery and peanuts, reading mantras."

The family was concerned. Balaji explains, "My mother and father started to monitor his activities. To outsmart them, Amma would keep his traditional temple wear in his school bag and after school go straight to the temple." No amount of scolding could change his mind.

At age fifteen, he announced to his family he was becoming a renunciate and moved out, living alone in an empty rental house that his family owned. The house had been vacant for some time because of a *putthu* (a mound with a snake pit) in the back yard. Amma meditated for long hours by the *putthu* and offered mud from it as a healing

*prasadam* to those who came to see him. His fame began to grow as tales of miracles spread.

Shortly after his 16th birthday, Amma had a defining experience. Sitting on a bus on his way to school, he felt a ray of energy emerging from his body, which projected onto the sky, forming an immense vision of Goddess Narayani. She was adorned in white, holding a conch, the chakra and a lotus, giving blessings. The image then dissipated and returned, as a shining ray, back into Amma's body. On May 8, 1992, the young man proclaimed that he was the avatar of the Goddess, Sri Narayani. Raji Murli, a dancer from Bengaluru and close devotee of Amma, recounts, "Amma says that Vellore, centuries ago, was a dense forest where sages performed penance. They earned a boon, and it was promised that Sri Narayani would descend as an avatar."

Amma's fame spread like wildfire in the following years. Siddhis (miraculous powers) were reported by devotees. Many were impressed by his intuitive knowledge. Raji Murli recalls a famous story of a woman who, doubting Amma's divinity, was asked by Amma to close her eyes. "She saw Goddess Narayani sitting on a lion. The Goddess declared, 'Whenever dharma declines and adharma rises, I take birth in the world. Now I am born as Narayani. My name is Sakthi Amma.'"

Sushumna Dasi, 70, who has been a devotee for eleven years, spares no praise. "After I attended Amma's full-moon puja, I was convinced that Amma is an avatar, a God-like

person. I am impressed by her humility. She offers unconditional love. I have never ever seen Amma being judgmental."

Ramana, the chief priest, tells his own story. One day he had the impression that the stone image of the Goddess in the temple looked fierce, almost angry, but he told no one about it. "To my amazement, Amma summoned me the next day and asked me how the Goddess looked, because he had performed some special pujas to calm Her down."

Natalie Cederquist, a sculptor who lives in Arizona, remembers her first encounter, which happened in New York. "I could feel Amma as pure energy. I felt happy like a little child. My husband, Jim Levin, says that Amma is divine light coming unadulterated from a crystal clear window."

Most of Amma's time is spent doing un-failing daily pujas to Narayani, including a special yagna every full moon that attracts thousands. Some ask him why he worships, since he himself is the Goddess. To this he cryptically replies, "I do it for the sake of the world."

Devotion and surrender are the core of Amma's teachings. He has given his devotees a unique mantra, *Aum Namō Narayani*, to be repeated daily by those who want to be connected with the Goddess. Even people who do not have time for other spiritual practices can spend a few moments each day chanting the mantra, he teaches. His instruction is to not ask for anything when doing the mantra. Just surrender to Narayani's wisdom. She knows what you need, he assures. The Divine Mother knows best.

## Amma's Wisdom

*Excerpts from HINDUISM TODAY correspondent Rajiv Malik's exclusive interview with Sakthi Amma*

"Wisdom is the one thing that will bring peace in one's life—not money, not power, not intelligence."

"Like a mother uses sweets to assuage her child, so has Amma used gold to attract people. The Narayani Peedam had started in 1992, but the number of devotees increased tenfold after Sripuram was inaugurated. That is because of the gold. Now, how will this will lead to wisdom? Walking the Star Path to the sanctum is an experience that takes hours, and they read inspiring quotes along the way. They ponder about the wisdom, meditate on it. That wisdom will change them."

"We all know everyone will have different levels of energy at different times and different emotions. Emotions are energy and they influence all around you. Some of them connect you with your Divinity, the positive ones, such as compassion, kindness, mercy, unconditional love, beauty, wisdom, love, creation and joy. It is a divine joy that creates beauty in this world, like each flower, each fruit. When you are in touch with the Divine in you, you need not think, create or plan, the divine thought will just happen. That was how Sripuram happened, how everything happens. It does not come from the money. It is all with the *sankalpa*, the divine intention. In a

similar way, when you understand yourself as Divinity, think about yourself as Divine, then you are part of the Divine. Amma is telling us that it is not only that Amma can do that, but you also can do great things."

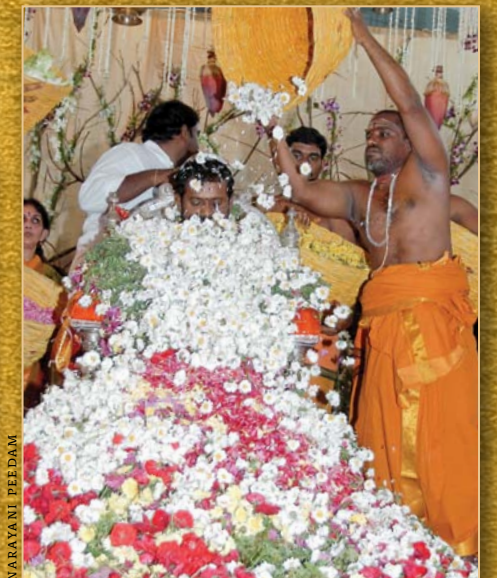
"Pujas bring miracles. Puja is for the Divine, for the transcendent Paramatman. Puja is offering our love to the Divine. By honoring the Paramatman, you are loving the whole universe, and that is why Amma has not traveled much. Amma could meet five thousand or at most ten thousand people a day, but by doing puja one is taking care not just of all humans, not just of our world, but taking care of the whole universe, which itself is Paramatman."



Amma's devotees are thrilled to have as their guru someone who is not merely

close to the Goddess, but avers to be Narayani Herself

*(Clockwise from top) Amma smiles during Satguru Purnima celebrations. A priest literally covers Amma with flowers during a special puja. The Narayani Peedam gets much attention from the media. Watched by sagely sannyasins depicted on the wall, Amma and the priests make offerings at the sacred fire during the full moon yagna.*





## Art and Service

**M**ALAIKODI, A SLEEPY VILLAGE UNTIL a few years ago, has been transformed by the influx of pilgrims, enriched by new jobs, uplifted by culture and healed by Amma's medical programs. Under the sprawling branches of the Sri Narayani Peedam one finds the dual expressions of art and selfless service, two activities traditionally connected with Hindu temples.

The thrust for sponsoring art is powerfully evident throughout the complex in the form of statues and paintings. Performances of music and traditional dance are held in the Shanti Mandapam, a wide, theater-like hall. Dramatic shows are an integral part of annual festivals. Amma honors the artists with a traditional shawl, *dakshina* and, sometimes, by singing or playing along.

Near the Shanti Mandapam stands the Narayani Seva Hall, intended for Annadanam—feeding guests. All those who come to the Peedam and participate in the activities are provided a meal. The organization has an interesting sponsorship program: when devotees want to perform any *seva*, they must pay a fee. In this way they are serving an activity and sponsoring it at the same time.

The list of social services maintained by the Narayani Peedam is long and inspiring. Shakti Amma conducts large philanthropic events in the Narayani Seva Hall, such as the donation of hundreds of bicycles, sewing machines, clothing and even artificial limbs



ALL PHOTOS: NARAYANI PEEDAM

for the impaired.

The Sri Narayani Vidyalaya school, inaugurated in June of 2000, provides education programs from kindergarten to grade 10. Over 1,000 students are guided by a full-time staff of 50. Classes are conducted in English. Besides the standard syllabus, students are also taught spirituality, with an emphasis on moral values and Hindu culture. Music, dance and other art forms are encouraged. "We also teach Sanskrit *shlokas* and music to our children," explains Suresh Babu, the manager of Sripuram. "They learn to chant mantras in unison for a long time. It's beautiful to hear." Parents line up anxiously at the beginning of each academic year, hoping to obtain admission for their children.

The Sri Narayani Peedam also helps children in other schools in the community. A program called Vydyanethram provides encouragement and financial support. Books and stationary are distributed, along with tables, chairs, blackboards and school uniforms. Each year, bicycles are gifted to the best students; 8,000 have been given so far.

The brightest graduates are awarded college scholarships. Subhashree, 19, a student of engineering who received a scholarship from Amma, narrates, "We came in touch with Amma's institution only last year, when I pursued a scholarship. We are not a devotee family of Amma. The annual fee of my college is around eighty thousand rupees. My family could not afford that. I am so happy that Amma is giving me this!"



Amma's organization runs dozens of other worthy programs. The Jyothi Swaroopini program provides help for smaller Hindu temples and shrines of all denominations in the state's villages and towns, supporting priests and providing *puja* supplies. The Arogya program conducts classes and task forces on basic health practices. The Kalyani initiative sponsors mass marriages for indigent families, taking care of all the arrangements and the ceremony, including the feeding of the guests. Amma personally blesses the couples, who also receive basic items to set up their homes and begin their lives. The Punarjanma (rebirth) program helps prison inmates reintegrate as productive members of society, and it supports families of inmates while they are in jail.

Nature is not forgotten. Cows find solace in the Ghosala project, which rescues and provides a home for cows and male calves headed for slaughterhouses. The Sakthi Amma Afforestation Program protects endangered plants, provides education about ecology and sponsors research on sustainability. Large-scale reforestation programs are underway; 500,000 trees have been planted since 2003. To reduce its environmental impact, the Peedam runs a large-scale recycling and composting system.

Sometimes a boon comes not from a program, but from the motherly way Amma does things. For example, when faced with the proliferation of craft stalls outside Sripuram, Amma told the temple manager to let them be and benefit from the temple's

abundance, with the proviso that they sell traditional handicrafts made by local village women.

The Peedam's most visible contribution to the community might be the Sri Narayani Hospital & Research Centre, a 200-bed state-of-the-art hospital inaugurated in June 2005.

The hospital provides quality medical care to those with limited or no financial resources, who have neither hope nor chance of receiving paid medical advice and treatment. Medical outreach camps are conducted to give free treatment and advice to needy villagers, virtually at their door steps. A nursing college attached to the hospital provides aspiring nurses with the necessary pre-training. Volunteer villagers receive training in health, nutrition and prevention of diseases. In total, more than 2 million patients have benefitted from the hospital and its programs.

How is all this funded? Dr. Balaji, director of the hospital, gives an example. "We had to set up a urology department. Amma asked me how much money was needed. 'You will get it,' Amma said. I soon got a call from a generous donor who gave us one crore rupees (US\$225,000). Whatever Amma says or visualizes eventually happens."

Sakthi Amma, when asked about the Peedam's amazing accomplishments of the Narayani Peedam that benefit Hinduism and the world, reveals the secret: "The ability to do great things in this world comes from the heart." Amma's heart, like his work, is overflowing even at this young age. One can hardly fathom what lies ahead of the dynamic Narayani Peedam.



## Under the blessings of Goddess Narayani, both art

(Counterclockwise from top) Several styles of dance grace the stage at the Shanti Mandapam; an artist dances as Ardhnarishvara, Siva-Shakti, using a veil to alternately cover the male or the female side during the performance; Amma sings along with famous percussionist Sivamani



## and selfless service blossom side by side

(Clockwise from top) Neat and disciplined, the children of the Sri Narayani Vidyalaya School are their parents' joy; the hospital's modern equipment helps cure thousands every year; 200 beds await those who need healing; Amma displays a check constituting one of many grants from the Peedam to the community





# How Our Food Choices AFFECT THE ENTIRE PLANET

Professor Peter Singer, Jim Mason and Michael Pollan investigate the food chain behind three meals, challenging us to use our shopping dollars to effect global changes

*In The Ethics of What We Eat, Why Our Food Choices Matter (Rodale, 2006), Professor Peter Singer and animal rights activist Jim Mason take the food-choice debate to a whole new collective level. Eating meat, poultry, fish and factory farmed dairy products not only contributes to animal abuse, but also environmental degradation, social injustice and climate change. The New York Times describes this book as "Vital, urgent and disturbing." We introduce each section in italics; the rest is from the book itself.*

**The Standard American Diet**  
*Some Hindus think eating chicken or eggs is somehow more innocent than eating beef. They don't realize that factory chickens*

*contribute to pollution, social injustice and gambling with dangerous microbes.*

More than 600 million chickens a year are raised on the Delmarva Peninsula near Washington, D.C. The chickens produce more manure than a city of four million people. Nutrients in the manure wash off into the rivers and seep into the ground water. A third of shallow wells in the peninsula, including those going into the underground aquifer used for drinking water, have nitrate levels above safe drinking standards. Runoff has created a 100-mile-long "dead zone" in the Chesapeake Bay that cannot support fish, crabs, oysters or other species of ecological significance.

In 2000, a Kentucky citizen said, "My fam-

ily lives next to chicken houses. The smell is nauseating. My son and I got stomach cramps, diarrhea, nausea. My son had intestinal parasites. Where are the children's rights? Should families have to sacrifice a safe, healthy environment for the economic benefit of others?"

In 1999, there was an investigation of seven deaths that occurred in Tyson operations. One was a 15-year old boy working as a chicken catcher in Arkansas. Investigators found another 15-year-old and two 14-year-olds in Tyson plants.

In October 2005, a United Nations task force identified as one of the root causes of the bird flu epidemic "farming methods which crowd huge numbers of animals into small spaces." After an outbreak of avian flu in Canada, University of Ottawa virologist Earl Brown said, "High-intensity chicken rearing is a perfect environment for generating virulent avian flu virus."

## What's Happening to All the Fish?

Atlantic salmon is commercially extinct. Cod has become so scarce that there is a running joke in Massachusetts that Cape Cod will have to be renamed. A quarter of the world's commercially important ocean fish populations are depleted. Worldwide, humans are eating around 100 million tons of marine life each year.

Commercial fishing methods have become both more efficient and more wasteful.

## The Book Explores Three Meals:

(top) a cheap McDonald's example of the common American diet built, our authors say, on animal abuse, environmental degradation and social injustice; (far left) the dubious meal of a conscientious omnivore could include so-called happy chicken and organic vegetables; (left) 100% vegan Thanksgiving dinner: Tofu "turkey" and all the trimmings

Bigger boats and bigger nets capture greater numbers of fish than ever before. But their gear damages the seabed and scoops up unwanted species—officially, "bycatch," but known at sea as "trash" and just thrown overboard, usually either dead or dying. Each year about a quarter of all fish taken worldwide is bycatch—that's some 27 million tons, billions of living creatures, trashed.

## Where Did Your Milk Come From?

The modern dairy cow has been bred to produce as much milk as possible and now produces more than three times as much milk as a typical dairy cow did fifty years ago. The result is considerable stress on the cow's body. Writer Peter Lovenheim saw a cow give birth at Lawnel Farms in New York. Forty minutes later the calf was taken away, later died on a concrete floor and ended up on the farmer's compost pile. The lifespan of a cow is around 20 years, but dairy cows are usually killed by the age of eight.

## "Happy Animal Meat"—Are We Sure?

*A new breed of meat-eaters call themselves conscientious omnivores. They vote against industrial food, but eat meat from "animal friendly farms." But Singer and Mason ask, "Is the treatment really humane?"*

A 2004 undercover video taken in Postville, Iowa, shows what can happen when inspectors are not present. AgriProcessors, Inc. is a kosher slaughterhouse, which means that it kills animals in accordance with orthodox Jewish dietary law. In theory, fully conscious kosher slaughtered animals should die in a few seconds after having their throat cut with a single slash of a sharp knife. In the video, however, cattle who have had their throats cut and their tracheas removed still thrash around for a long time before they die. Some struggle to get to their feet—and even succeed in standing up. Workers wait for the animal to collapse. One animal goes so far as to stagger off to another area before collapsing. Two more cattle come down the killing line and have their throats cut before this one is finally hoisted off its feet and dragged away.

Since inspectors are not assigned to the point of kill in any US slaughterhouses, or at animal friendly farms, it is probable that anyone who eats meat will, unknowingly, from time to time be eating meat that comes from an animal who died an agonizing death. [See: [www.humanemyth.org](http://www.humanemyth.org)]

## Better Choices: Organic, Local, Vegan

*The authors show us that organic, non-genetically modified food, grown locally, affects more than just our health. Choosing organic is good for Mother Earth and protects agricultural workers from toxic exposure. The authors dismantle objections to a*

*vegan diet and show that vegan mothers can bear healthy children.*

An acre of land used for crops will feed about ten times as many people as an acre of land used for grass-fed beef. In the US alone, 300 million acres are dedicated to grazing. [This does not include land for corn and soy to feed cows, pigs and chickens living on feed lots or in cages.] If there were no demand for meat or any other animal products, that would release significant land from agriculture. If this land were returned to forest, we would restore habitat for countless species of wild animals and birds. It would also lower world demand. This could slow down or end the clearing of tropical forests and stop the trend to develop factory farming in countries such as China. The typical US diet, about 28 percent of which comes from animal sources, generates 15 tons more carbon dioxide per person per year than a vegan diet with the same number of calories. So, a vegan diet is an effective way to reduce one's contribution to climate change.

Gandhi remarked that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals. We should boycott those who treat animals, the environment and workers callously.

**Vast vision:** *Their book also explores genetically modified food and the state of our oceans and fish. The authors advise against being fanatical, offering various levels of "compliance" and guidelines for making ethical choices.*

## The Ethics of What We Eat

Why Our Food Choices Matter

PETER SINGER  
AUTHOR OF ANIMAL LIBERATION  
JIM MASON

"Peter Singer may be the most controversial philosopher alive; he is certainly among the most influential."  
—New Yorker



Jim Mason (above) is an author, lecturer, journalist, environmentalist and attorney who specializes in human/animal concerns. In 1980, he and Singer wrote *Animal Factories*, the first public indictment of factory farming. A longtime animal rights activist, he has also wrote the important book *An Unnatural Order: Why We Are Destroying the Planet and Each Other*. See:

[www.animalsvoice.com/jimmason/](http://www.animalsvoice.com/jimmason/)  
[www.farmusa.org](http://www.farmusa.org)  
[www.lanternbooks.com](http://www.lanternbooks.com)

Peter Singer (above) is the Ira W. Decamp Professor of Bioethics, University Center for Human Values, Princeton University. In 1975 his book *Animal Liberation* inspired a whole generation to question our treatment of animals. Not everyone agrees with every, sometimes unexpected, conclusion Professor Singer draws from his brand of utilitarian ethics—the greatest good, for the greatest number. But he is certainly making people think about difficult issues and is currently focused on ending world poverty. See his web sites at:

[www.princeton.edu/~psinger](http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger)  
[www.thelifeyoucansave.com](http://www.thelifeyoucansave.com)

The dollar's looking good here.





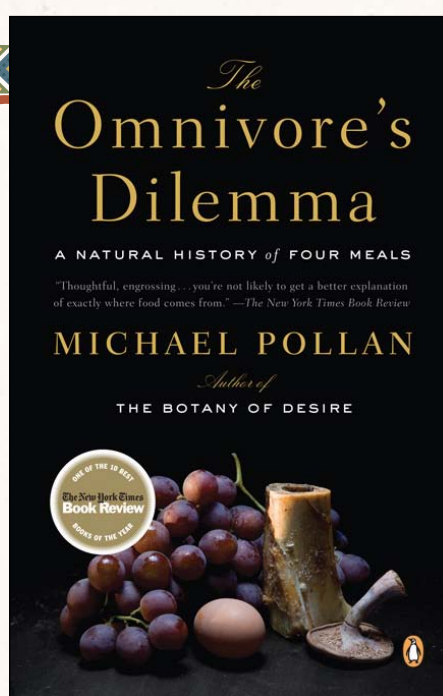
Michael Pollan's masterful writing style and breadth of research combines ecology, biology, history and anthropology with personal experience. Though he reluctantly ends up with a feeble defense of meat-eating, his books are compellingly educational and also provide non-fiction adventure. They will make readers stop and think before buying factory raised flesh or processed foods.

#### Problem: We Can Eat Almost Anything!

To one degree or another, the question of what to have for dinner assails every omnivore, and always has. When you can eat just about anything nature has to offer, deciding what you *should* eat will inevitably stir anxiety, especially when some of the potential foods on offer are liable to sicken or kill you. This is the omnivore's dilemma. My premise is that like, all creatures, humans take part in a food chain, and our place in that food chain, or web, determines to a considerable extent what kind of creature we are. Each of this book's three parts follows one of the principal human food chains from beginning to end: from plants photo-synthesizing calories in the sun, all the way to the dinner table. Reversing the chronological order, I start with the industrial food chain, which concerns us the most.

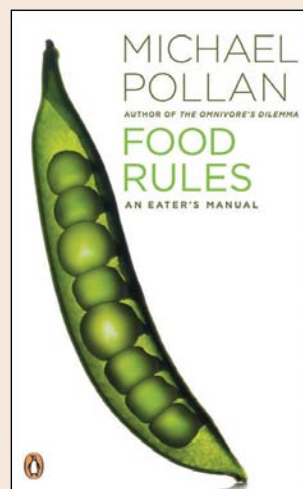
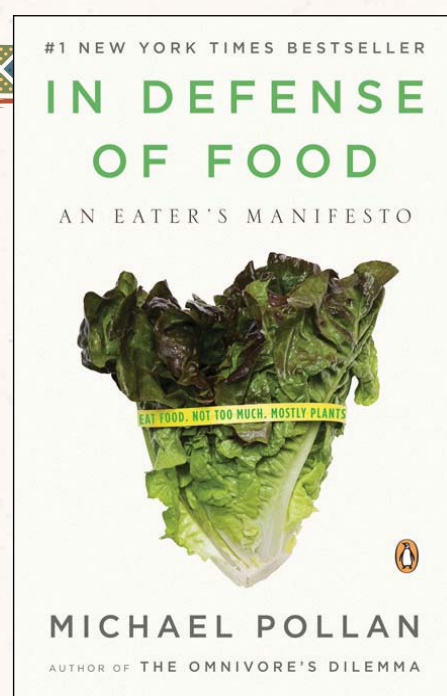
#### From Food Culture to Food Science

The sheer novelty and glamour of the Western diet, with its seventeen thousand new food products every year and the marketing power—thirty-two billion dollars a year—used to sell us those products, has overwhelmed the force of tradition. Nutri-



**Most Influential Food Books:** Michael Pollan's books on food are all best-sellers. He is a journalism professor at the University of Berkeley. Pollan was named to the 2010 TIME 100, the magazine's annual list of the world's 100 most influential people. In 2009 he was named by Newsweek as one of the top 10 "New Thought Leaders."

tionism, which arose to help us better deal with the problems of the Western diet, has largely been co-opted by it: used by the industry to sell more nutritionally "enhanced" processed food and to undermine further the authority of traditional food cultures that stand in the way of fast food.



Pollan's 2010 bestseller, Food Rules, provides simple keys to food choices. Skip his recommendations on flesh, but put the rest to work and you will have a better life and contribute to a planetary upgrade. Here is a selection from his 64 food rules.

#### Eat Food

2) Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food. 3) Avoid food products containing ingredients that no ordinary human would keep in the pantry. 4) Avoid food products that contain high-fructose corn syrup. 6) Avoid food products that contain more than five ingredients. 7) Avoid food products contain-

ing ingredients that a third-grader cannot pronounce. 8) Avoid food products that make health claims. 11) Avoid foods you see advertised on television. 12) Shop the peripheries of the supermarket and stay out of the middle. 13) Eat only foods that will eventually rot. 14) Eat foods made from ingredients that you can picture in their raw state or growing in nature. 17) Eat only foods that have been cooked by humans. 19) If it came from a plant, eat it; if it was made in a plant, don't.

20) It's not food if it arrived through the window of your car. 21) It's not food if it's called the same name in every language. (Think Big Mac, Cheetos or Pringles.)

#### Mostly Plants

22) Eat mostly plants, especially leaves. 25) Eat your colors. 26) Drink the spinach water. 30) Eat well-grown food from healthy soil. 31) Eat wild foods when you can. 33) Eat some foods that have been predigested by bacteria or fungi. 35) Eat sweet foods as you find them in nature. 36) Don't eat breakfast cereals that change the color of the milk. 37) "The whiter the bread, the sooner you'll be dead." 38) Favor the kinds of oils and grains that have traditionally been stone-ground. 39) Eat all the junk food you want as long as you cook it yourself. 41) Eat more like the French, Japanese, Italians, Greeks.

#### Not too Much

44) Pay more, eat less. 45) ...Eat less. 46) Stop eating before you're full. 47) Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored. 49) Eat slowly. 52) Buy smaller plates and glasses. 53) Serve a proper portion and don't go back for seconds. 54) "Breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dinner like a pauper." 55) Eat meals. 56) Limit your snacks to unprocessed plant foods. 57) Don't get your fuel from the same place your car does. 58) Do all your eating at a table. 60) Treat treats as treats. 62) Plant a vegetable garden if you have the space, a window box if you don't. 63) Cook. 64) Break the rules once in a while.



## HEALTH

# Healing Hypertension Naturally

Chances are you or someone you love has high blood pressure. Step beyond the fear and learn how ayurveda can treat this troublesome malady.

BY DR. VIRENDER SODHI

**A**NY VISIT TO THE DOCTOR CAN BE STRESSFUL—EVEN RAISING your blood pressure temporarily—but the blood pressure test during your annual physical can be critical to your long-range health.

If your blood pressure is elevated mildly, your doctor may send you home and tell you to relax, lose weight, exercise and drink less alcohol. If you smoke, he will ask you to give up the habit. These lifestyle changes have been found to aid in restoring normal blood pressure. If your blood pressure is elevated consistently for the next few visits, you will be told you have hypertension and it's time to start treatment.

The typical therapy follows a three-step process: First, you are prescribed a Step 1 medication—a diuretic, such as Lasix, Lozol, Chlorthalidone or Bumex. Eventually, the diuretic becomes less effective and a Step 2 medication called a beta-blocker is usually added. Examples of beta-blockers are Lopressor, Levatol, Inderal, Cartrol and Atenolol. This drug also loses its effectiveness in time. In Step 3, an ACE-inhibitor, such as Captopril, Lisinopril, Benazepril Hydrochloride, Quinopril Hydrochloride, or a calcium channel blocker, such as Norvasc, Verapamil or Cardizem, is prescribed.

Looking back on the results of this three-step process, what happened? You took three steps toward curing your hypertension, but

with each step you regressed faster towards worsening health. By adding extra medications, your quality of life rapidly declined. You may have gone from taking no medications to taking three or four. You are now tied down to a schedule of prescription drugs, scared into believing that if you stop any of them you will suffer a stroke.

Not to mention the side effects! Diuretics cause potassium loss; it is no coincidence that the sodium/potassium ratio is off balance in those with hypertension. Many people report personality changes from beta-blockers, ACE-inhibitors and calcium channel blockers. Beta-blockers also block the beta cells of the pancreas. Over time, this increases the risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome. The situation could be stressful enough to lead you to the refrigerator to console yourself with food, resulting in weight gain and further increase in blood pressure!

According to the American Heart Association, 75 million Americans age 20 and older have high blood pressure. That is roughly one in three adults. The three-step medication protocol is given to about 50.6 million patients each year. But the death rate from high blood pressure increased 19.5% from 1996 to 2006, and the actual number of deaths rose 48.1%. If the death rate has increased that much, one can conclude that the conventional treatment methodology is ineffective. So, why is this popular three-step protocol still being used?



Side Effects of High Blood Pressure Medications	
ACE Inhibitors	Fainting, facial swelling, swelling of the head, abdominal pain or swelling, nausea, vomiting, difficulty swallowing or breathing, skin rash with or without itching, fast heart beat, headache, allergy reaction, fatigue, loss of taste, drowsiness, diarrhea, joint or chest pain, jaundice, pooling of blood in the heart
Beta Blockers	Fatigue, dizziness, weakness, cold hands, insomnia, loss of sex drive, shortness of breath, depression, leading to diabetes and metabolic syndrome
Diuretics	Increased urination, electrolyte abnormalities, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, rash, impotency, joint problems, breast enlargement

### Treating Hypertension Naturally

Before you look for other ways to lower your blood pressure, it's important to check your knowledge on the topic. Did you know the following?

1. Every part of your body can regenerate itself when it is given the right substances. Drugs are not on your body's wish list! Most block the body's natural healing processes.
2. Complementary health practitioners have been helping their patients lower their blood pressure for decades. That isn't anything new, and it isn't a fad.
3. Once someone begins a complementary health treatment program for high blood pressure, they start feeling better in the first few weeks. By the end of the program, they may not need blood pressure medication at all.

To determine how to treat high blood pressure naturally, first you have to understand what causes the condition. Medical doctors still don't know the true cause of 90% of hypertension cases, but they do know that it's related to atherosclerosis, kidney disease, chronic stress leading to adrenal disease, as well as diet and lifestyle factors that contribute to these conditions. As

with many diseases, there is also an emotional component, contributed by excess worry, irritability, anger, greed and ego.

Many patients with high blood pressure report a frequent feeling of tension in their body, as if they are on the verge of a fit of anger. They aren't angry at anyone in particular when this happens. The tension they feel is real. Scientists have confirmed that this excessive neural tone may



be associated with high levels of noradrenaline. A study published by the *Journal of Human Hypertension* in 2002 showed a high correlation between elevated levels of noradrenaline and hypertension. Therapies as simple as relaxation were found effective in this study.

### Lifestyle Changes

Breathing exercises are simple, and we can benefit from as little as ten minutes of daily practice. In a 2009 *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, researchers reported that various breathing exercises benefited those with hypertension, and that slow breathing had the most value.

Yoga is easy to incorporate into one's lifestyle. In a University of Pennsylvania study, researchers found that twelve weeks of regular yoga practice produced clinically meaningful improvements for patients with prehypertension and Stage 1 hypertension.

Meditation can also be beneficial. Recently a randomized controlled trial concluded that Transcendental Meditation decreased blood pressure associated with psychological distress and increased coping in young people at risk for hypertension.

One of the easiest factors related to blood pressure that you can control on your own is your diet. Reducing sodium intake can have a dramatic impact on blood pressure. Cut back on processed, packaged foods and read labels for sodium content. Any packaged or canned food should have less than 140 mg sodium per serving. Refrain from adding salt to your food, and incorporate more vegetables and fruits in your diet.

Omega-3 fatty acids have been associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and improved blood pressure. Vegetarian sources of this essential nutrient include olive oil, leafy green vegetables and the seeds and oils of walnut, flax, hemp, pumpkin and soy.

Reduce your alcohol consumption. Studies have shown that if you have cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure, a reasonable alcohol limit is 30 ml or 1 oz per day. For men, this equates to two 4-oz glasses of wine (at 12-13%) or two 12-oz glasses of beer (~4%). For women, those limits are cut in half.

Avoid sugars. Foods that are high in sugar, including most processed foods, contribute not only to high blood sugar levels but high blood pressure as well. A rise in blood sugar leads to a rise in insulin and eventual insulin resistance, weight gain and diabetes. In 1997,

**Dilemma:** Many seniors are confronted with the choice between allopathic and naturopathic/ayurvedic treatment for hypertension

**Options:** Which would you choose: the three-step process involving pharmaceuticals whose benefits eventually wear off, leaving you with only fear and side effects (left), or herbal remedies, such as the bark of the T. arjuna tree (right), plus supplements, foods and lifestyle changes that could actually solve the problem?

the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published studies showing that diabetes can be predicted by a diet containing foods with a high glycemic index (and thus a high glycemic load). Glycemic index is a scale that indicates how fast and how high a particular food raises your blood sugar level. Google "glycemic index" and check the glycemic index of the foods you eat. My advice is to find ways to have a sweet life without sugar!

### Dietary Supplements

A complete dietary supplement list should be determined by your nutritionist or health practitioner based on lab tests. However, these are the most commonly used supplements for those with hypertension, besides a standard multiple vitamin/mineral:

Potassium	2400-4400 mg daily
Magnesium	2300-4300 mg daily
Vitamin C	2500-4500 mg daily
Calcium	800-1400 mg daily
Arginine	500 mg per 22 pounds of body weight
CoQ10	100 mg daily

Moderate blood pressure decreases have been seen just from supplementing CoQ10, a vitamin-like substance present in most cells. Various studies have linked magnesium deficiency and insufficient calcium intake with hypertension. Vitamin C helps the body get rid of heavy metals, such as lead, cadmium and mercury, that can be linked to high blood pressure. Arginine is an amino acid connected with the nitric oxide system, directly affecting blood vessels' ability to dilate and constrict—a key factor in high blood pressure.

### Herbal Remedies

Many herbs can be used successfully to provide therapeutic benefits to the cardiovascular system and reduce blood pressure. Herbs can often fill in biochemical gaps, missing links in health, providing medicinal constituents that act powerfully in the body.

Many medical doctors will tell you a particular herb is dangerous because it contains one specific constituent, but the constituent does not act alone once it is in your body. It acts in concert with other constituents of the herb, which oppose or neutralize it. Because of this, herbs often do not have negative side effects. However, not all herbs are medicinal, and all medicinal herbs have contraindications known to herbalists and health practitioners trained in their usage.

*Terminalia arjuna* is an herb found in abundance in the Himalayan forests, Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The saponin glycosides found in this herb are responsible for an inotropic effect, meaning that the force with which the heart and other muscles contract is affected. The arteries are strengthened by its flavonoids and proanthocyanidins. This important herb also interacts with LDL cholesterol, accelerating its turnover in the liver and inhibiting its oxidation, thus contributing to cholesterol reduction in the body. *Terminalia* has the potential to correct abnormalities in endothelial cells, those that line the interior of blood vessels. A study in 2003 indicates that it has beta-blocking activity. *Terminalia* has no toxicity, does not interact with drugs and has no contraindications.

Studies on this herb are very promising. In a 2002 double blind crossover study published in the *Indian Heart Journal*, 58 males diagnosed with ischemic heart disease were given either the stan-



dard medical treatment (isosorbide mononitrate, a blood vessel dilator), *Terminalia*, or a placebo for one week. They were monitored for symptoms of angina (severe chest pain) during exercise. *Terminalia* reduced symptoms better than the placebo and was equal to the standard medical treatment.

The root of the *Rauwolfia serpentina* tree has been used for thousands of years to lower blood pressure. It contains more than 50 active alkaloids that work synergistically. *Withania somnifera*, called Ashwagandha in Sanskrit, reduces stress and blood pressure simultaneously. *Convulvulus pluvialis* lowers blood pressure indirectly by lowering LDL cholesterol and reducing anxiety.

### Protecting Against Other Degenerative Diseases

The same bad habits that cause hypertension are linked to other degenerative diseases: smoking, inactivity, obesity/overweightness, not relaxing enough, not eating enough green vegetables, not eating enough fiber, insufficient vitamin and mineral intake and a diet devoid of herbs and spices such as ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, garlic, licorice and fenugreek. Why not eliminate these factors now and reduce your risk for hypertension and various degenerative diseases?

### The Meaning of It All

What does all this mean to you? It means that if you have hypertension now, you don't have to have it forever. You could take the road that many people travel when they have high blood pressure, ending up on the three-step medication protocol that leads to greater illness and declining quality of life, or you can make your next three steps an investment in your life and health by encompassing: 1) relaxation, 2) diet and supplement changes and 3) exercise.

The choice is yours, but know that you will have people cheering you on and opposing you no matter which path you choose. By investing in yourself, you can discover that your own three-step program far exceeds the expectations of most people, including your own medical doctors. What a great day it will be when you can say, "I'm healed of high blood pressure!" Schedule that day on

your calendar six months from now, and begin taking the actions that will make it a reality.

.....  
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Hindu American Foundation  
Promoting understanding, tolerance and pluralism

## Together, let's build a Hindu American voice that is heard by our government

Like you, HAF cares about effective dialogue with our elected officials to ensure our government is attentive to the Hindu American community. HAF aims to seize every opportunity to

let them know who we are and how they can best represent us. We are actively working to educate public policy leaders about Hinduism and the needs of our community. Enter the world of HAF to find inspiration in an organization that advocates for all of us by reaching out to public policy leaders, media, academia and interfaith groups. Visit our website, and become a member today.



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CHAPTER

5

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century India

India was suppressed by centuries of Muslim and British foreign rule. But after independence in 1947, its founders succeeded in welding together the ancient land into a strong, united, modern nation. The Hindu religion survived intact and thrives today in the world's largest democracy.

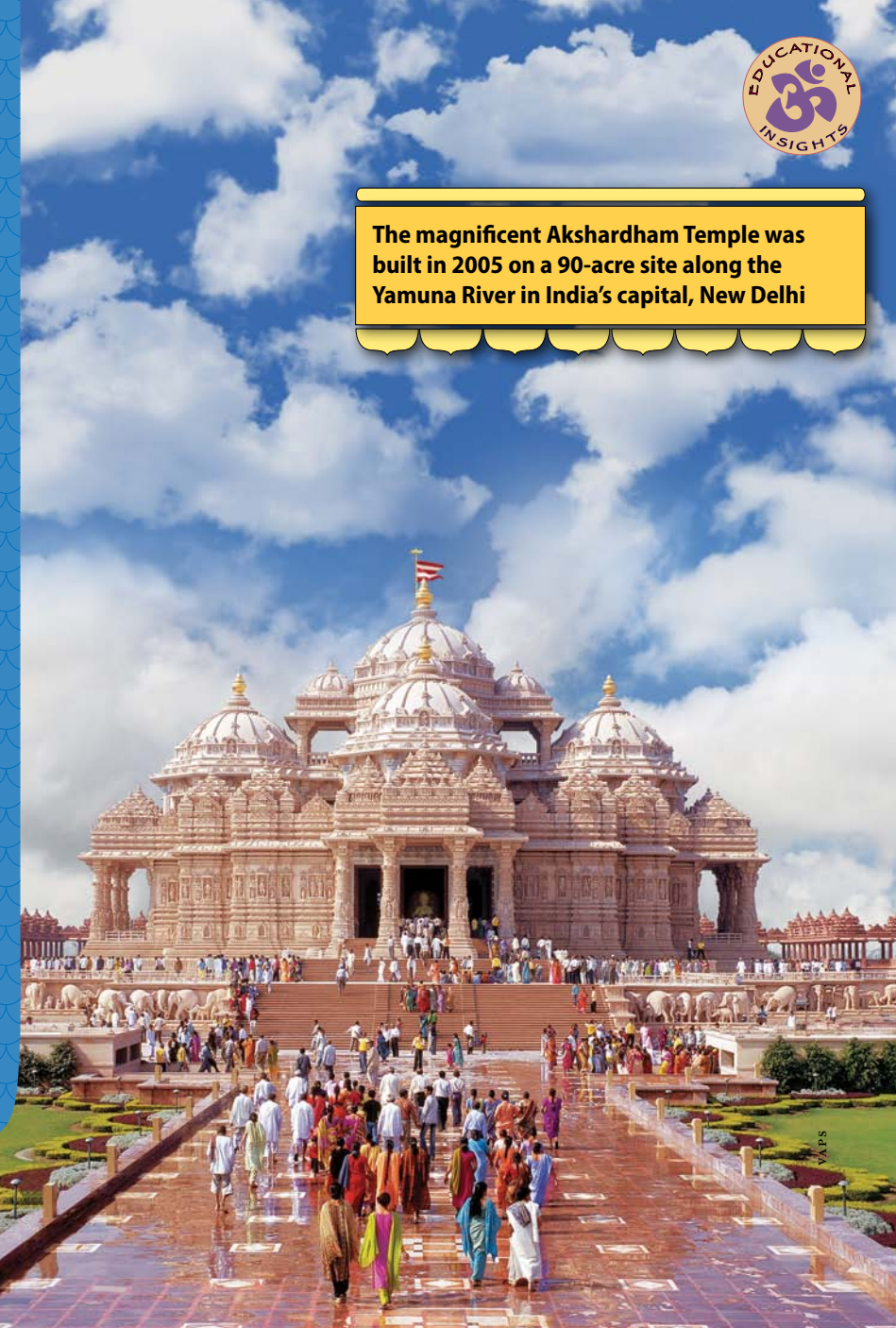
### Note to Students, Parents and Teachers

This Educational Insight is the fifth and final chapter in our series on Hindu history for use in US primary and secondary schools. In these few pages, we give a broad overview of India since independence. Reporting on recent history is always a challenge since historians lack the chronological and emotional distance to impartially judge key people, trends and events. But clearly, the foremost accomplishment is that India has remained a united, democratic country since 1947. It escaped the fate of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and neighboring Pakistan, each of which split up. It is also notable that modern India continues to be

what India has always been: a deep source of wisdom and practical spirituality valued by societies around the world. This lesson was written and designed by the editorial staff of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with Dr. Shiva Bajpai, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Northridge.

*Academic reviewers: Dr. Klaus Klostermaier, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jeffrey D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; Dr. Michael K. Ward, Visiting Lecturer in History, California State University, Northridge. Educational Consultant: Justin Stein, PhD student, University of Toronto, and former middle school teacher in New York.*

The magnificent Akshardham Temple was built in 2005 on a 90-acre site along the Yamuna River in India's capital, New Delhi





# The World's Largest Democracy Is Born

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. India's independence in 1947 was accompanied by the violent Partition.
2. India is a sovereign republic and is the largest democracy in the world.
3. States were formed largely along linguistic lines.
4. India has remained a voice for freedom and peace despite border wars with Pakistan and China.

### The Big Idea

India is a unified, democratic, progressive nation with a strong central government.



This column in each of the three sections presents our subject outline for India and Hinduism from 1947 to the present.

1. Identify consequences of India's independence for the Indian people and for other colonized peoples.
2. Describe difficulties in unifying a nation with many distinct political and linguistic regions.
3. Describe the Indian constitution and political system.
4. Explain the causes and results of India's military conflicts since Independence.

## If this were YOU...

It is 2004. Your family is part of a clan of blacksmiths who have lived in the same village for 1,000 years. You have learned the trade. But you did well in school and can go to college and take up a new profession. You would make more money, but would have to move to the city, breaking with tradition and leaving your parents alone in their old age.

## Would you stay in your village or go to the city?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND:** From the first elections in 1951, every Indian citizen has had the right to vote, regardless of race, color, creed, gender or social standing. In 1913, Norway was the first country to allow all its citizens to vote. France only allowed women to vote in 1946. In the US, African Americans were not guaranteed voting rights until 1965.

## Ending the Colonial Era

"At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom," proclaimed India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in India's Parliament on August 15, 1947. "A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds **utterance**." That moment set 370 million people free from two centuries of colonial rule.

Independence was accompanied by tragedy in the **Partition**. Pakistan was split off from India to form a Muslim-majority Islamic nation of 70 million people. West Pakistan lies adjacent to Afghanistan. East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, is at the mouth of the Ganga near Burma. Fifteen million people moved from Pakistan to India or vice versa in a dramatic and often violent population exchange. Over a million Hindus and Muslims died in riots and attacks that lasted months.

Newly free India led a worldwide movement to end colonialism. By 1954, Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, and then Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were freed. Independence soon came to Africa, once under near complete European domination. First Libya, in 1951, then Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and so on. By the mid-1960s nearly all of Africa was liberated.

## The Princely States

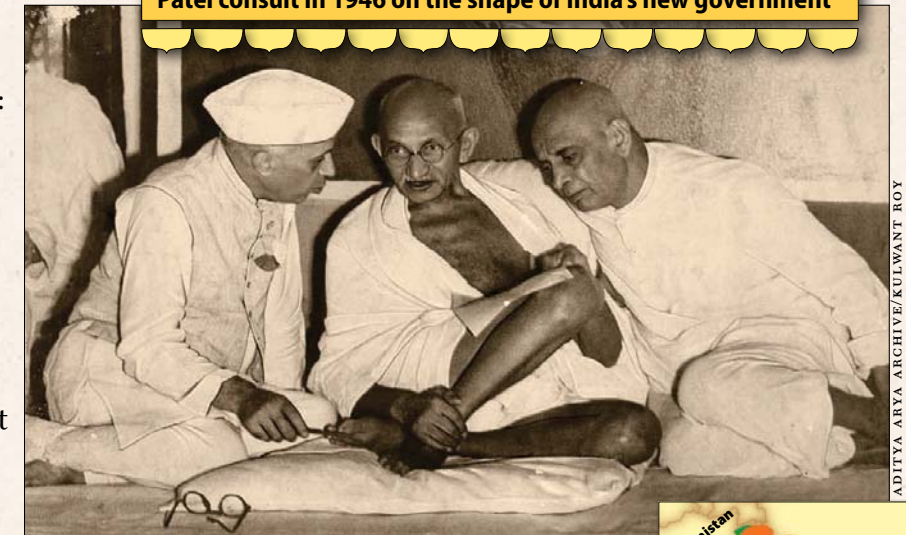
Newly independent India was diverse: 800 languages and dialects were spoken among 2,000 ethnic groups. Bringing unity to the ancient land after Partition was an amazing accomplishment by India's leaders.

Within India's borders were 17 provinces formerly under direct British rule and 562 virtually independent "princely states." These states were also granted independence in 1947. In theory, each could have become a new country. In practice, however, those within newly-formed Pakistan were expected to join it, and the rest to become part of India.

With Mahatma Gandhi's blessings, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took on the job of negotiating with the princely states. Patel contacted each prince or princess and explained the options: join India or stay independent. He then offered them all the time in the world to think about it—so goes the popular story—as long as he had their decision by that evening! The rulers had little choice. They had only held power because of British backing. The citizens of their realms were expecting the same freedoms as the rest of the country. In the end, the few who resisted were compelled to join.

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in northwest India was a different matter. Maharaja Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of this Muslim-majority state, delayed in making a decision about which country to join until after independence. On October 22, 1947, militant Muslim tribals and Pakistani troops invaded the state. On October 26, Maharaj Singh agreed to join India. The Indian army was sent to defend Kashmir against the invaders, beginning the first of India's several indecisive wars with Pakistan.

(left to right) Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel consult in 1946 on the shape of India's new government



## India's Constitutional Structure

In 1947, a committee was formed to create India's constitution. It was headed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar of the Mahar caste (an "Untouchable Community"), who was one of India's foremost legal scholars. The constitutional committee carefully studied the British, US and French governments, as well as traditional Indian political systems, choosing elements they felt were suitable for modern India. They unified the country by establishing a strong central government and setting a single pattern for state and local governments. They sought to ensure social equality and justice for every citizen.

The committee's draft was debated and revised over the next two years and finally adopted on November 26, 1949. At 400 pages, it is the longest national constitution in the world, because it includes many laws that in other countries were set by their legislature or courts after a constitution was adopted.

The preamble begins: "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **sovereign, socialist, secular**, democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status



Partitioned India

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

### utterance

expression, a voice to speak

### partition

"divide into parts;" when capitalized, the separation of Muslim-majority Pakistan from the rest of British India

### sovereign

independent

### socialist

in this context: equal economic opportunity for all

### secular

not based on religion; treating all religions the same under the law



and of opportunity; and to promote among them all **Fraternity** assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.”

By comparison, the US constitution fits on four large pages, setting out only the spirit of the nation and the basic structure of the federal government. Individual US states have their own constitutions. India’s constitution details the structure of government right down to the village *panchayat*, or ruling council. The powers and responsibilities of government are assigned either to the **Central Government** or to the state governments, or shared. Powers not specifically given to the states are kept by the Central Government. In contrast, in the US Constitution, powers not specifically given to the federal government are kept by the states.

At both central and state levels, India’s government follows the British parliamentary system. The president is head of state, elected by the parliament. He or she serves for five years. The position is largely ceremonial, like that of the British **monarch**.

In India, elections are held every five years. The leader of the political party that commands a majority of seats in parliament

becomes prime minister and forms a government with the approval of the president. If the party loses its majority, the “government falls” and new elections are called.

Establishing India’s States

A key power of India’s constitution permits the Central Government to merge or divide states as it sees fit. It used this power to reorganize the nation along **linguistic** lines. Areas where most of the people spoke the same language became one or more states. For example, the Tamil-speaking area of South India became Tamil Nadu. The Hindi-speaking region was split into several states. Having a single language made governing each state much easier. Today India has 28 states. It also has seven “Union Territories,” which are ruled directly by the Central Government.

International Relations

India was a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of nations. These nations, mostly of Asia, Africa and Central and South America, sided with neither the US nor the Soviet Union during the decades-long “Cold War” after World War II. Prime

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**fraternity**  
friendship and support within a group

**Central Government**  
India’s term for what is called the “federal government” in the US

**monarch**  
a royal head of state, especially a king, queen or emperor

**linguistic**  
having to do with language

**separatist**  
a person or group seeking to separate one territory from another, usually based on ethnicity or religion

**autonomy**  
self government

Minister Nehru was respected worldwide as one of NAM’s strongest voices for peace and freedom.

But peace was a challenge on India’s own borders. The hasty Partition left the subcontinent unstable. Pakistan’s invasion of Kashmir in 1947 led to two years of open war with India. India’s appeal to the UN resulted in a cease-fire. Since then, Kashmir has been divided by the “Line of Control,” separating Pakistan-occupied territory from India’s Kashmir. War broke out again in 1965 and also ended in stalemate. In 1989 Pakistan-backed Islamic **separatists** and infiltrators resumed violent attacks and riots. Since then, they have driven hundreds of thousands of Hindus out of Kashmir and worsened the security situation in the state.

In 1962 India lost a brief war with China over their disputed and ill-defined border in the Himalayas. The war was a deep personal shock to Nehru. He had taken at face value the Chinese government’s promise not to attack, even when warned by members of NAM to not be so trusting. India was badly prepared to defend against the Chinese and had to appeal to the US for support, which was a humiliating compromise of NAM principles.

India’s failure in the Chinese border war caused a complete rethinking of military strategy. Nehru’s successors, especially his daughter Indira Gandhi, turned India into a major modern military power armed with missiles and nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh

Since independence, citizens in Bengali-speaking East Pakistan felt neglected by their rulers, who were mostly Urdu-speaking people based in West Pakistan. East Pakistan demanded economic and political **autonomy**. A nationalist upheaval followed. West Pakistan responded in 1971 by sending 100,000 troops to brutally put down what they regarded as an outright revolt. Civil war followed. Ten million refugees fled to India forcing India to come to East Pakistan’s aid. In December, West Pakistan’s forces surrendered to the Indian army. East Pakistan became the independent nation of Bangladesh, and the refugees returned.

Section 1 Assessment

REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

- 1. **Define:** What event in India’s history is called the Partition? Why is it called the Partition?
- 2. **Explain:** How was Kashmir different from other states at independence? What has occurred as a result?
- 3. **Compare:** How does India’s government differ from that of the US at the federal and state levels?
- 4. **Explain:** How did India reorganize its states? How did the strategy help improve state government?

FOCUS ON WRITING

- 5. **Analyze:** What was the Non-Aligned Movement? How was India involved in NAM?

Timeline: 1947 to 2010

1947

India gains independence from the British Empire on August 15, after a long, mostly nonviolent struggle

1948

Gandhi is assassinated by a Hindu fanatic over payment of huge sums of money to Pakistan as agreed to at the time of Partition

1950

India’s constitution goes into force on January 26, India’s Republic Day

1950

China occupies, then effectively colonizes Tibet; the Dalai Lama flees to India in 1959

1950s

India launches land reform to redistribute to farmers hereditary holdings of large landowners

1954

A.L. Basham publishes *The Wonder That Was India*—still one of the best histories of early India

1960s

Indian swamis begin coming to the West to teach meditation and hatha yoga

1960s

Sitarist Ravi Shankar’s tours in the West help popularize Indian music

1962

Border war with China causes India to modernize and strengthen its military

1969

India becomes self-sufficient in food as its population reaches 500 million

1970

East Pakistan declares independence as Bangladesh

1971

India explodes nuclear device in test at Pokhran

1974

300,000 Hindus flee Kashmir region as Muslim militants seek separation from India

1980

India begins economic reforms to loosen state management of its economy

1984

Indira Gandhi is assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in revenge for army’s attack on Sikh separatists in the Golden Temple

1990

India develops a nuclear strike force

1991

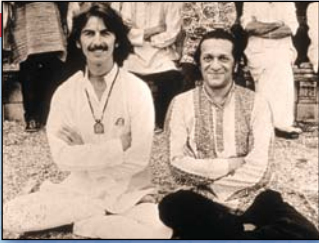
US government report ranks India as the world’s third most powerful nation

1998

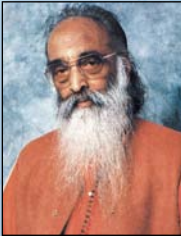
World’s largest religious gathering ever: Kumbha Mela with 60 million pilgrims at Prayag, the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna rivers

2001


2010




Ravi Shankar (at right) and George Harrison



Swami Chinmayananda



Indira Gandhi



Bathing at Kumbha Mela

I-4

HINDUISM TODAY

JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2011

I-5



## What You Will Learn...

## Main Ideas

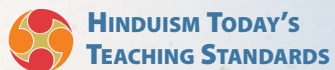
1. India is a successful democracy.
2. The Indian nation carefully managed its economy for steady growth.
3. India is a secular country, but the various religions are not treated the same under the law.
4. Pilgrimage is a popular religious practice that helps unify India.

## The Big Idea

India's unity and social and economic development have made it a major world power.

## Key Terms

democracy, p. I-6  
secular, p. I-8  
pilgrimage, p. I-9



5. Discuss the elements that have kept India a unified nation.
6. Examine India's political, technological, economic, social and secular developments since 1947.
7. Explain the concept of pilgrimage and how it impacts the nation.

# Building a Unified Nation

## If this were YOU...

It is April 2010, and your parents have brought you to Haridwar from New York for the Kumbha Mela. You feel odd having to take a “bath” in the freezing Ganga surrounded by tens of thousands of strangers. But as you approach the river, those around you suddenly are like family. And after the bath, you are all talking together and laughing.

## What creates such feelings among strangers?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND:** India's constitution provides for “reservations” for members of the lower castes and tribes—historically disadvantaged people. A quarter to half of the seats in higher educational institutions and the jobs in government are set aside for these groups. Without such quotas, many would not qualify for the school or job.

## Planning for Progress

Newly independent India faced a host of problems—political, military, economic, social and religious. To maintain national unity, Nehru and the other great minds who oversaw the country's early years focused on running a good government. They had two key strategies: 1) to keep India democratic by ensuring that every citizen had the opportunity to be part of the political process; 2) to modernize the nation through educational, economic and social development.

## The World's Largest Democracy

In all Indian general elections, the participation of the people has been enormous. Without a doubt, the democratic system has kept the country stable and united. But political parties quickly learned to win elections by creating “voting blocs,” groups of people who always vote for the same party. A party seeks to convince a group that only it can truly serve the group's interests. Unfortunately, such appeals often run along narrow religious, **ethnic**, linguistic or caste lines. Issues that could otherwise be settled in a friendly manner are kept alive and used for political and occasionally **treacherous** ends.

There remains one internal threat to the democratic order: communist-inspired local uprisings in India's eastern states running from Bihar to Andhra Pradesh. Poor and tribal people support these



## Famous Pilgrimage Destinations:

- ◆ Hindu ▲ Jain  
● Buddhist ■ Sikh

with government support. To prevent excessive profit-taking, the government set maximum prices for important goods. A few key industries were **nationalized**, such as banks. Heavy industries requiring large capital investment, such as steel and military arms manufacturing, were established and run by the government.

Overseas investment was regulated. India's years as a colony made her wary of letting foreign investors control any vital industry. **Import duties** were kept high, making it expensive to bring in foreign goods. India wanted to be self-sufficient and build its own economic **infrastructure** to meet the demands of its growing cities and villages.

A major issue was food. India was not producing enough to feed her ever-increasing population and had to import nearly ten million tons of food yearly from the US. The technological advancements of the

armed separatist movements because they have seen little economic improvement in their region. Local police and government forces struggle to control these militant groups.

## Economic Development

During India's first decades, the economy was a mixture of state control and free enterprise. Prime Minister Nehru began a series of “five-year plans,” setting economic goals for agriculture, manufacturing, etc., to be met

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

## treacherous

having hidden and unpredictable dangers

## ethnic

of a specific place, race, culture or religious origin

## nationalize

government takeover of a business, such as a bank or railroad

## import duty

a tax on goods brought into the country

## infrastructure

the basic facilities of a nation such as roads, dams, bridges, phone systems, airports, railways



For some Indian states, such as Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, the economic activity generated by pilgrimage is a significant percent of the state's total economy.

ACADEMIC  
VOCABULARY**urban**

cities and towns, in contrast to villages

**virtually**

almost or nearly the same as

**pilgrimage**

travel to a holy place for a religious purpose

**labyrinth**

a complex network of passageways

**lore**

knowledge and belief held by a group and passed on by word of mouth

“Green Revolution” resulted in India’s complete self-sufficiency in food by 1969.

India’s growth for the first 30 years was slow, but the economy was stable and **urban** unemployment low. By the 1980s and 90s, however, the world had changed. International trade and cooperation had increased. Countries with totally state-controlled economies—such as the Soviet Union and China—started having serious problems. In 1991, the Soviet Union broke up into many countries. Seeing a similar threat to its own economy, India began easing restrictions on industries and encouraging private business, free trade and foreign investment.

The results were dramatic (see chart below). India’s rate of growth went from a low 3.5% to a healthy 7.5%. Its middle class rose from less than 5% of the population in 1950 to more than 17% today. The middle class is projected to reach 40% in 2025. India has evolved into a major world power through scientific and technological advancement, development of industries and defense build-up.

**Religious and Social Development**

India today is 81% Hindu, 13.4% Muslim, 2.3% Christian and 1.9% Sikh. It has the third largest population of Muslims in the world—161 million, after Indonesia and Pakistan. Relations between religions are generally peaceful, especially at a personal level. However, several religious riots and attacks have occurred at great loss of life.

**INDIA’S PROGRESS**

	1950	2010
<b>Population (millions):</b>	300	1,027
<b>Life Expectancy (years):</b>	30	61
<b>Percent of World Income:</b>	3.8%	6.3%
<b>Annual Rate of Growth:</b>	3.5%	7.5%
<b>Living in Poverty:</b>	50%	27%
<b>Percent in Middle Class:</b>	<5%	17%
<b>Literacy Rate (adults over 15):</b>	12%	68%
<b>(15 to 24 years old):</b>		82%

India’s constitution proclaims the country a secular state. Yet India does not treat all religions the same, as other secular governments do. For example, Indian state governments seized management of Hindu temples and control their income, yet they allow other religions the freedom to manage their own places of worship, including mosques and churches. The resulting oddity is that Hindu temple priests are **virtually** government employees. In addition, the laws regarding inheritance, marriage, divorce, adoption and other family issues are different for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. (For legal purposes, the term *Hindu* is defined to include Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists—all religions founded in India.) In truly secular nations, all religions follow the same laws and freely manage their own religious property. The unequal treatment of religions in India is an ongoing source of conflict. It is ironic that Hinduism, the majority religion, has fewer rights than minority faiths.

**The Power of Pilgrimage**

One religious practice unites India as a nation: **pilgrimage**. There are hundreds of national pilgrimage destinations across India, and thousands at the regional level. The holy city of Varanasi welcomes 100,000 pilgrims a day, and a single temple, Tirupati, hosts 50,000 and more each day. Pilgrimage to religious sites is so popular that families plan their vacations around them. In India a vacation is not only for relaxation and fun; it is also a religious experience and opportunity for cultural interaction.

Throughout Indian history, the movement of pilgrims has had significant impact on the religious and cultural unity of the country. Pilgrims create a continuous religious conversation as they travel about the land. Religious discussions form a bond among travelers and promote a sense of belonging



PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY

**RAMESWARAM**

The huge Rameswaram temple near the southern tip of India is a prime pilgrimage destination for Hindus of all sects. Here Lord Rama established a shrine to Siva upon Rama’s successful rescue of his wife Sita in Lanka, as recorded in the *Ramayana*.

The central practice here is ritual bathing, a common practice at many pilgrimage destinations—Haridwar and Varanasi, for example. This doesn’t mean bathing with soap, but immersing oneself fully clothed in a river or lake as a blessing. Ritual bathing is found in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other religions. The bath-

ing may be full immersion, sprinkling or washing hands and feet.

At Rameswaram, there is not just one ritual bath, but 22, beginning in the nearby ocean. From that salty dip, you and your fellow pilgrims walk, completely soaked, to the temple. There a temple helper leads you to a courtyard inside the entrance where he drops a bucket 20 feet into the first well, pulls it back up by a rope and pours the holy water over your head. He then leads you rapidly, sometimes running, from well to well. You lose all sense of direction as you zig-zag through the stone corridors and courtyards of this ancient, **labyrinthine** temple. Despite the wells being so close together, their waters are of different

tastes and temperatures. According to temple **lore**, the water of each cleanses the pilgrim of a specific sin. Devout pilgrims hold a past transgression firmly in mind while being doused by each bucketful of water, which they believe cleanses them of that particular karma. Skeptics are present, naturally, even among pilgrims. But few depart the 22nd well without a feeling that something quite extraordinary and purifying has happened to them during those two hours.



to the country and religion. Such interactions are repeated at thousands of destinations each year.

The map on page seven shows the most important Hindu pilgrimage sites in India, as well as those significant to Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs. Prominent sites, such as Varanasi, Mathura, Ayodhya, Ujjain and Rameswaram, attract huge crowds year around. Most sites, however, are crowded with devotees only during annual festivals. For example, hundreds of thousands attend the summer festival at the Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha. Three huge chariots carrying the temple Deities are pulled through the streets by crowds tugging on ropes a foot in diameter. Similarly, devotees of Lord Krishna flock to the towns of Vrindavan and Mathura during Krishna Janmashtami and other major festivals.

Several pilgrimages require serious effort,

such as Amarnath Cave. It is located 12,700 feet high in the Himalayas, in Jammu and Kashmir. Every summer 400,000 pilgrims walk on a narrow, rocky trail for four or five days to reach this sacred shrine to Lord Siva.

**Section 2 Assessment****REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE**

1. **Explain:** How did India’s economy change in the 1990s? Why?
2. **Evaluate:** Is life for the average Indian better today than it was before independence? Provide several examples.
3. **Elaborate:** Why do you think family laws are different for Hindus, Christians and Muslims in India?
4. **Describe:** What do pilgrims do at Rameswaram temple? How does it affect their lives?

**FOCUS ON WRITING**

5. **Analyze:** How does the practice of pilgrimage help unify India’s diverse peoples?



# The Impact of Hindu Ideas Today

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Hindu ideas and ideals are changing the way people all over the world think and act.
2. Hindu metaphysical concepts have been well known in the West for about 200 years.
3. Yoga, meditation, ayurveda, even Indian food and movies are increasingly popular.

### The Big Idea

India's profound spiritual knowledge and yoga practices influence the world.

### Key Terms

hard and soft power, p. 10  
metaphysics, p. 11  
hatha yoga, p. 12  
meditation, p. 12  
holistic, p. 12

### HINDUISM TODAY'S TEACHING STANDARDS

8. Define "soft" and "hard" power and apply these concepts to India.
9. Analyze the influence of Hindu metaphysics, theology, yoga and meditation in the Western world today.
10. Describe how Indian culture found its way to the West, including medicine, movies and food.

## If this were YOU...

You have had a persistent cough for many months. A Western doctor has given you medicine to control the symptoms, but it won't cure the underlying illness. You go to an ayurvedic doctor, who prescribes certain healing herbs and a better diet. It is more work on your part, and it will take time for his remedy to make you well.

### Do you try ayurveda or stay with your first doctor?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND:** In this section we discuss India's "soft power" as opposed to its "hard power." Hard power is a nation's military and/or economic strength used to impact international affairs. Soft power refers to the influence of a nation's ideas, culture and values on the way others believe, think and act.

## Dharma and the Future

In our modern world, Hindu ideas have spread far and wide from their origin in India. In Chapter Four (covering 1850 to 1947), we spoke of two of these ideas: respect for all religions and political change by nonviolent methods. In 2009, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a poll in which they asked Americans about their belief in a few "Eastern" concepts. The results showed that 24% believe in reincarnation, 23% in "yoga not just as exercise but as a spiritual practice" and 26% in "spiritual energy located in physical things like mountains, trees, crystals." This is nothing new: polls of Americans show similar numbers of believers, at least in reincarnation, as far back as the 1950s.

When did these ideas come to America? Many Native American tribes believe in reincarnation and spiritual energy located in physical things. While traveling in the American West in the 1890s, Swami Vivekananda was astonished to meet a cowboy who said he firmly believed in reincarnation. He may have learned the idea from the Native Americans, or perhaps discovered it on his own.

These spiritual concepts shared by many faiths throughout the world tend to be identified as Eastern or specifically Hindu, because it is within the Hindu tradition that they are logically and clearly explained and their **theological** foundations clarified. In this section

we will explore how Hindu metaphysics (the study of reality beyond our five senses) came to the West. Hindu **theology**, **yoga**, meditation and **ayurveda** found a receptive audience.

### Hindu Ideas Spread to the West

Hindu metaphysics arrived in America and Europe early in the 19th century in translations of Hindu scriptures—the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. Scholars, writers and poets immediately found value in the concepts of karma, dharma, reincarnation and the divinity of the soul. They marveled at the Hindu concept of God as not only personal, but also immanent, (pervading all nature and humanity) and transcendent (beyond the physical universe).

America's 19th-century freethinkers deeply appreciated the Hindu openness to many religious paths and its freedom to choose one without condemning others as wrong. All these ideas are prominent in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau. They influenced generations of writers and scholars, notably

Herman Melville, William James, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood.

Hindu teachers first came to the West in the late 19th century. Many were prominent, but Swami Vivekananda (see Chapter Four) was by far the most influential. He and other swamis and yoga teachers were popular with the educated and artistic communities, including famous scholars and actors. In the 1940s and 50s, Swami Prabhavananda translated the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* with the help of American devotees who were skilled writers. His clear and approachable books became popular, bringing these Hindu texts to millions in the West. Paramahansa Yogananda's classic *Autobiography of a Yogi*, published in 1946, introduced the idea of a life of spiritual striving and experience in story form.

The 1960s brought a wave of Hindu teachers to the West. Their teachings were eagerly welcomed by the youth of the **New Age**. Since then, karma, reincarnation and other Hindu ideas have become common in the songs, movies, art and novels of the West.

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

#### theology

the systematic study of the nature of God and religious belief

#### yoga

"union," physical and mental practices intended to awaken spiritual qualities

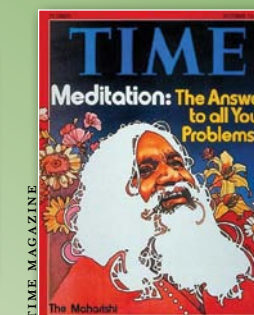
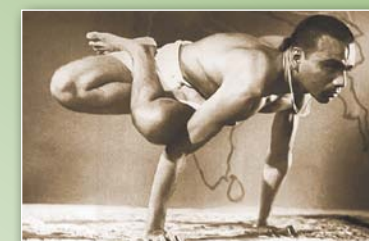
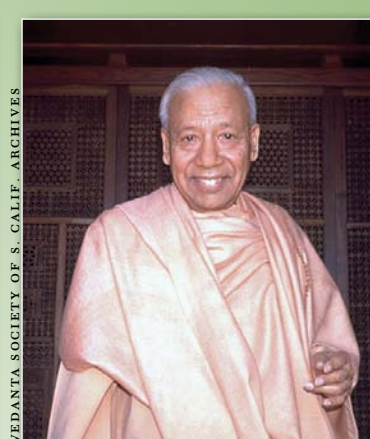
#### ayurveda

India's ancient medical science

#### New Age

a Western spiritual movement drawing on Eastern thought

### HOW HINDU THOUGHT AND PRACTICE CAME TO THE WEST



(Clockwise from above) Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), writer and Transcendentalist philosopher; Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976), translator of Hindu scripture; Swami Satchidananda (1914-2002), religious teacher and hatha yogi, addressing the famed Woodstock music festival in 1969; Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1912-2008), teacher of Transcendental Meditation; B.K.S. Iyengar (born 1918), influential yoga master



## Yoga

Central to Hindu ideas is the discipline of yoga. Hatha yoga, a system of physical postures, is the most widely recognized form of yoga in the West today. Generations of movie stars and dancers, back to the early 1900s, have helped publicize its benefits. In the West, hatha yoga is mostly promoted as a form of exercise in the West. But in India, it is part of a broader practice called *ashtanga yoga*, literally “eight-limbed yoga.” Hatha yoga is the third of the eight limbs. The first two limbs are ethical ideals and religious practices, including nonviolence, chastity, honesty, piety and worship.

Hatha yoga poses have fun names such as downward dog, cobra, plough and lotus, which describe the shape the body takes in the position. Poses are done in series to quiet the mind and emotions and relax the body. To Hindus, hatha yoga is not just a form of exercise, but an essential preparation for meditation and development of spiritual consciousness.

## Meditation

The fourth through eighth limbs of ashtanga yoga relate to meditation. The initial objective of meditation is to quiet the mind and emotions in order

to move awareness to the higher chakras. This is done in part through hatha yoga, which calms the body, and in part through breath control, which calms the emotions and quiets the thinking mind. One breath control method is to breathe in nine counts, hold one count, breathe out nine counts, hold one count and repeat. After a while, you can do the counting on your heartbeat. The object of meditation is not to sit and think, but to go beyond thinking into higher consciousness.

## Ayurveda

India has one of the world’s oldest systems of medicine, already described in Chapter One. Called ayurveda, “science of life,” it is gaining popularity in the West. It is a **holistic** system which deals with the causes of disease, not just the symptoms. Ayurveda emphasizes a healthy diet, especially not overeating, and regular exercise and massage. It makes use of thousands of herbs, including common spices such as pepper, cinnamon and turmeric. Indian cooking uses the knowledge of ayurveda. The spices are used for their medicinal effects as well as for taste. A key practice of ayurvedic doctors is “pulse diagnosis,” analyzing the patient’s pulse to identify any imbalances or disease in the body.

## Culture

India’s Bollywood films, with their rhythmic dancing and singing, are popular worldwide. The word *Bollywood* mixes *Hollywood* with *Bombay* (now Mumbai), center of India’s huge film industry. While they are not designed to promote religion or culture, these films convey the charming flair and flavor of Hindu lifestyles to people everywhere.

India is known for its varied and mostly vegetarian cuisine. It is commonly ranked among the top four, along with French, Chinese and Italian. The main ingredients of Indian cooking are rice, wheat flour, beans and a wide variety of vegetables and spices. Some Indian foods are notoriously hot, but most are mild. Indian restaurants abound in the West, especially in the UK, which has over 9,000!

## GREETING THE SUN

Jehan Lalkaka and Shamika Desai of Mumbai, both 16, demonstrate the 12 sequential poses of Surya Namaskara



## SURYA NAMASKARA

Hatha means “sun-moon” and is the name of the popular yoga exercises so common around the world. The name comes from the aim of balancing the male (the “sun” part) and female (the “moon” part) currents, mentioned in our next section on chakras. Each pose has a specific effect

upon the nerve system. The most famous set of poses is Surya Namaskara—the Sun Salutation, or greeting the Sun God. It tunes mind and body, while being a good workout! In India you can see people alone or in groups performing Surya Namaskara to the rising Sun.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Following independence, India rebuilt itself. It succeeded, improving its economy, halving the rate of poverty, doubling life expectancy and improving literacy six-fold. India is still a developing nation but is on track to be a superpower in the decades ahead.

India’s heritage of spirituality and religious thought continues to dramatically influence the world, as it has for centuries. Scholar Stephen Cohen said, “India has become a global cultural superpower. Its soft power is second to none. Whether at the highest level of philosophy or the lower level of Bollywood, Indian culture is spreading.”

Even in terms of hard power, India is already impressive. According to a 2010 report by the US government, India is today the third most powerful country in the world in terms of gross domestic product, defense spending, population and technology. The

report says that as of 2010 the US holds 22% of global power, China 12% and India 8%. Japan, Russia and Brazil each hold less than 5%. By 2025, the report predicts, US power will decline to 18%, China’s will rise to 16% and India’s to 10%. The future of modern India appears bright as she overcomes centuries of suffering to resume her historic position as a leading nation in the world.

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

### holistic

based on the idea that the parts of a whole are interconnected

## Section 3 Assessment

### REVIEWING IDEAS, TERMS AND PEOPLE

- List:** What key Hindu concepts are popular in the West?
- Explain:** How did Hindu ideas come to America in the 19th and 20th centuries?
- Describe:** How do hatha yoga and meditation impact the body? What is the purpose of breath control?

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Debate:** A few students want to start a yoga class as part of phys-ed. Others object, arguing that it is a religious practice which should not be allowed. Which side do you take? Why?



## The Seven Chakras

Metaphysics is the inner scientific study of reality beyond our five senses. Many religions believe in the existence of the soul, heaven, God and God's love for man. These are metaphysical concepts because we cannot hear, see, smell, taste or touch any of them.

The system of chakras is a key metaphysical concept in Hinduism. The Sanskrit word *chakra* means "wheel." A chakra is a center of energy and **consciousness** in our spiritual body, or soul. There are seven chakras, located from the base of the spine up to the top of the head. Through the lower three chakras, we interact with the world of our five senses. Through the higher four chakras, we perceive and interact with the reality beyond our five senses—the world of metaphysics.

Great Hindu saints have seen and described these energy centers, though not all in the same way. According to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (founder of HINDUISM TODAY), the seven chakras govern the faculties of: 1) memory; 2) reason; 3) willpower; 4) **direct cognition**; 5) divine love; 6) divine sight and 7) **enlightenment**. **Mystics** tell us that the chakras look like lotus flowers of different colors and numbers of petals.

The chakras are always active, but most people only experience the first three. As they evolve spiritually, they become aware of the higher ones. A great writer may use the fourth chakra's power of direct cognition. A person filled with love for all mankind is experiencing the fifth chakra. Someone seeing into the future through the power of divine sight is experiencing the sixth chakra. Through the seventh chakra, we can directly experience God and awaken miraculous powers.

Weaving through the chakras in the spiritual body are three *nadis*, or energy channels, which flow through the spine. The *ida nadi*, associated with the moon, is pink, emotional and feminine in nature. The *pingala nadi*, associated with the sun, is blue, logical and masculine in nature. Most women function mainly in the *ida* current. Most men function mainly in the *pingala* current. The yellow *sushumna nadi* is the channel of pure spiritual energy, flowing through the center of the spine. A highly spiritual person seeks to balance the *ida* and *pingala* and live in the pure energy of the *sushumna*.

### Word Help

#### consciousness

thought, awareness, perception

#### direct cognition

knowing something immediately through intuition, rather than through the senses or reason

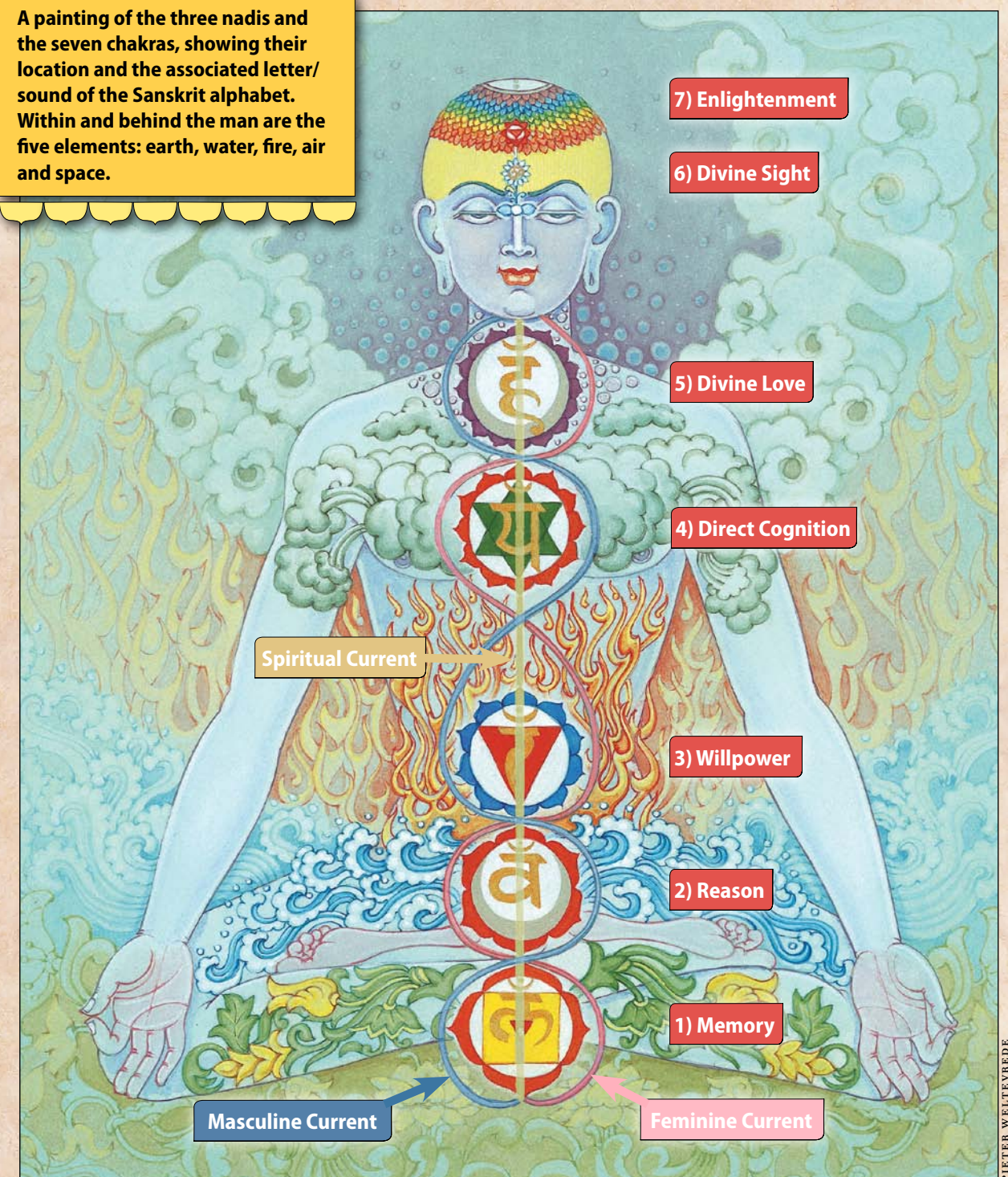
#### enlightenment

the highest human experience; realization of Divinity

#### mystic

a person who lives in the chakras of higher consciousness, seeking direct knowledge of God

A painting of the three nadis and the seven chakras, showing their location and the associated letter/sound of the Sanskrit alphabet. Within and behind the man are the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space.



### Understanding Chakras and Nadis

- Discuss:** Is the belief in angels a metaphysical concept? What about UFOs? Examine beliefs such as global warming, hell, karma, reincarnation, the Golden Rule, evolution and freedom of speech. Which are metaphysical? Why?
- Analyze:** Review your day and assign your actions and

- thoughts to the appropriate chakra and nadi. What does this say about how you live and think?
- Explain:** Why do you think it is necessary to balance the masculine and feminine nadis to live in the pure spiritual current?

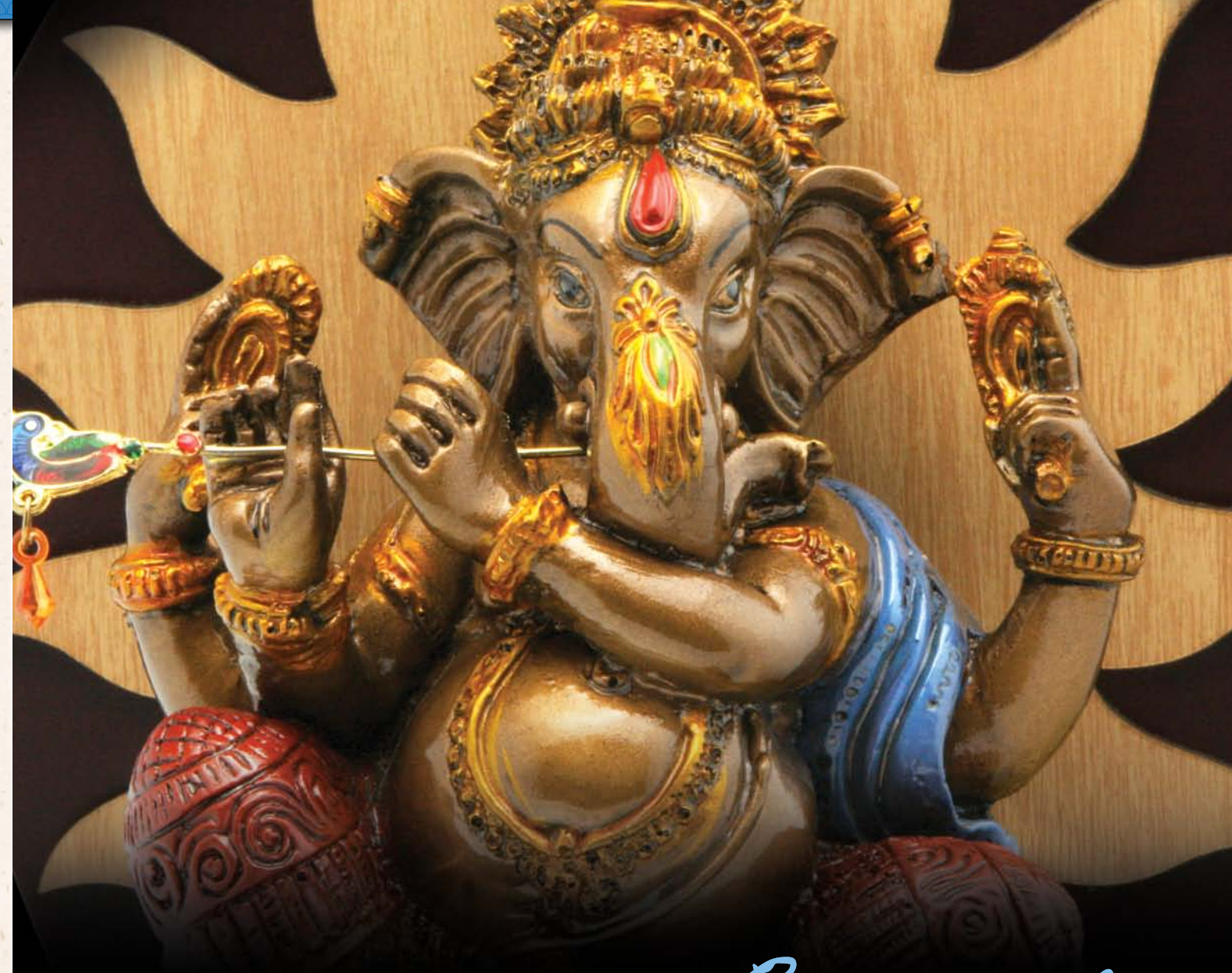


DIRECTIONS: READ EACH QUESTION AND CIRCLE THE LETTER OF THE BEST RESPONSE

- Which were consequences of the Partition?
  - Pakistan attacked Kashmir
  - 15 million people moved to or from Pakistan
  - One million people died in riots and from hardships
  - All of the above
- How were the states of India reorganized?
  - Following the boundaries of the princely states
  - On the basis of population
  - On the basis of linguistic groups
  - Along important rivers and mountain ranges
- A state has what powers in the Indian political system?
  - Only those specified in the national constitution
  - All those not granted to the Central Government
  - The same powers it had as a princely state
  - Those granted by its state constitution
- What did India's early leaders emphasize?
  - Making every citizen part of the political process
  - Achieving national economic self-sufficiency
  - Guaranteed higher education opportunities and jobs for lower castes and tribes
  - All of the above
- How did India change its economic policies in the 1990s?
  - Raised import duties on foreign goods
  - Eased restrictions on industries and encouraged private business and foreign investment
  - Became self-sufficient in food which made it possible to spend those funds within the country
  - Invested in foreign markets
- How has the poverty rate in India changed since 1947?
  - From 50% to 10%
  - From 50% to 25%
  - From 50% to 40%
  - Not at all
- What is one way India's secularism is unlike the West's?
  - State governments control Hindu temples
  - Government officials must belong to one religion
  - Only members of some religions can vote
  - State governments control all religious sites
- What unites India as one religious landscape?
  - Control by one denomination of Hinduism
  - Pilgrimage destinations throughout the country
  - Everyone speaks the same language
  - Everyone is of the same ethnic group
- What is the purpose of bathing at Rameswaram's wells?
  - To find release from past misdeeds
  - To guarantee entry to heaven
  - To be entered into the Hindu faith
  - To cleanse the body
- Which of the following is not governed by a chakra?
  - Divine sight
  - Willpower
  - Sushumna nadi
  - Memory
- Soft power is defined as:
  - Spiritual energy and force
  - Economic influence
  - Diplomacy
  - Cultural influence
- What fraction of Americans believe in reincarnation?
  - one-sixteenth
  - one-eighth
  - one-quarter
  - one-half
- What spiritual leader brought Hindu ideas to the West?
  - Swami Prabhavananda
  - Maharishi Mahesh Yogi
  - B.K.S. Iyengar
  - All of the above
- How does India rank in power among the world's nations?
  - Second
  - Third
  - Fourth
  - Sixth

**Internet Resources:** Go to [www.hinduismtoday.com/education/](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/education/) for a PDF version of this chapter, as well as Chapters One through Four. There you will also find additional teaching resources and letters of endorsement

from academics and community leaders. To order printed copies of this Educational Insight, go to [www.minimela.com/booklets/](http://www.minimela.com/booklets/).



Remover of Obstacles *Ganesha*

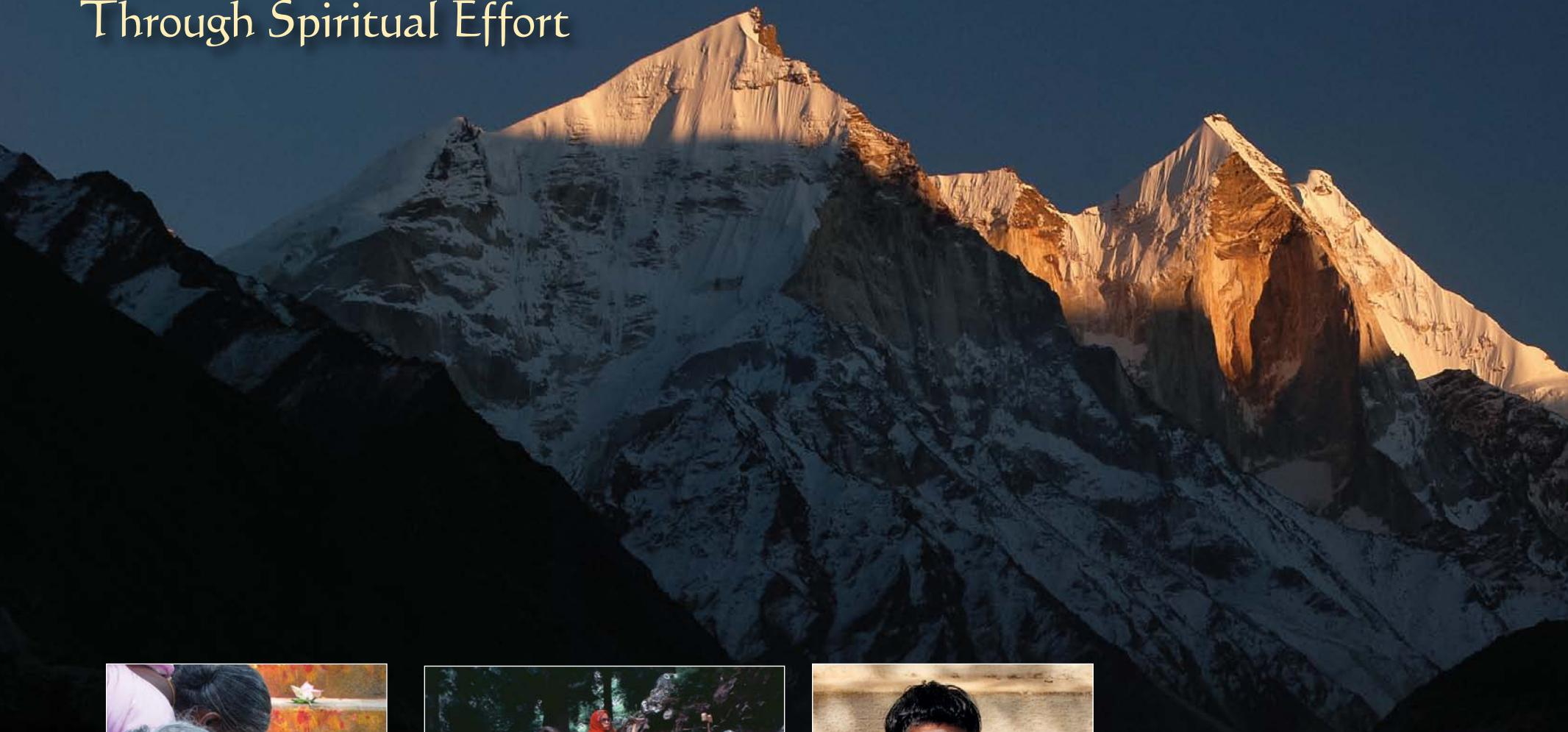
Bring home a Ganesha this season for auspicious new beginnings  
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# Sadhana

## Self-Transformation Through Spiritual Effort



THOMAS KELLY



DEVRAJ AGARWAL



THOMAS KELLY

Through devotion, meditation, scriptural study, austerity, pilgrimage and other practices, we develop character, gain control over the instincts and bring forth the innate purity and perfection of our soul.

### EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Spiritual life can be likened to climbing a mountain. Each experience offers opportunities to progress toward the peak, which represents illumination and union with the Divinity that lies within us. The inner climb to that spiritual summit depends, like earthy mountain climbing, on rigorously applying proven methods, called *sadhana* in Sanskrit.

**S***adhana* refers to disciplines undertaken to reach a specific spiritual goal—steady and persevering practice of a method or exercise prescribed for spiritual ends. Of course, goals vary widely among the different Hindu traditions. Wikipedia's explanation of *sadhana*'s goals highlights that diversity: "enlightenment, pure love of God, liberation from the cycle of birth and death, or a particular goal such as the blessings of a Deity, as in the bhakti traditions." ¶The idea of employing various means of spiritual accomplishment and thereby moving closer to the goal of God realization is appealing to all devout Hindus. On the other hand, the demands of modern life—work, school and commute time—give many the sense that there is not enough time to fit spiritual practice into an already overly busy schedule. Many pilgrims to our monastery confide to me they are caught in this dilemma. My advice is to establish a daily vigil, even if it is just 15 minutes, preferably in the morning, before you are caught up in your day. Try it for two weeks and see how it works out. Make it a habit, an appointment with yourself. Those who establish a daily vigil find that it makes them more efficient, more centered, more patient, more content and more productive. So it is time well spent! Once a strong habit is established, it becomes not only easy, but the day's most important appointment. The nature of your *sadhana* routine is up to you and your guru. It is your island of quiet, a time to worship the Divine, perform puja, do yoga, study scripture and get in touch with your innate Divinity. And, like anything else, the more effort you put into your vigil and the more consistent you are, the greater the benefits will be.

**Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**



DEVRAJ AGARWAL





The true Hinduism is a science of perfection. There is, in this true Hinduism, a solution to every individual, social, national and international problem. The *Upanishads* proclaim in unmistakable terms that, in reality, man is God. Man is therefore advised to live his day-to-day life in such a systematic way that, hour by hour, he is consciously cleansing himself of all those imperfections that have gathered to conceal the beauty and divinity of his true, eternal nature. The methods by which an individual may consciously evolve by his own self-effort comprise the content of Hinduism.

SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

DEVRAJ AGARWAL

**Sacred waters:** Below, a family offers milk into the Ganges at dawn as an act of prayer and supplication. At left, a priest bathes a Deity image with sandalwood water blessed at a fire ceremony. At right, devotees perform a subconscious cleansing sadhana on the banks of the sacred Wailua River in Hawaii.



## Discipline for Self-Transformation

An Inspired Talk Given by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami to a Gathering of Devotees

**W**HEN WE STUDY AND PRACTICE OUR RELIGION, WE ARE NOT NECESSARILY performing deep sadhana. We are simply dispatching our religious duties. The performance of personal sadhana, discipline for self-transformation, is one step deeper in making religion real in one's life. Through sadhana we learn to control the energies of the body and nerve system, and we experience that through the control of the breath the mind becomes peaceful. Sadhana is practiced in the home, in the forest, by a flowing river, under a favorite tree, in the temple, in gurukulas or wherever a pure, serene atmosphere can be found. A *vrata*, vow, is often taken before serious sadhana is begun. The *vrata* is a personal pledge between oneself, one's guru and the angelic beings of the inner worlds to perform the disciplines regularly, conscientiously, at the same time each day.

### Establishing Your Sadhana

Who sets the course of sadhana? The course of sadhana can be set by an elder of the Hindu community. It can also be set by one's satguru. Your mother and father, who are your first gurus, can also set the course of sadhana for their children. Or it can be set by yourself, from a book. There are many fine books available outlining the basics of yoga, sadhana and meditation.

Where does sadhana begin? It begins within the home, and it begins with you. This is ancient wisdom recognized not only in India, but among many great civilizations of history. Thus upon the wall of a famous ancient Greek temple and oracular center at Delphi was inscribed "Know thyself." The

religion of the Greeks, which was in many respects not unlike Hinduism, is long since gone, but remaining temple ruins testify to its magnificence. By disciplining your mind, body and emotions through sadhana, you come more and more into the inner knowing of yourself.

You will first discover that when the breath is regulated, it is impossible for the thinking mind to run wild, and when the breath is slightly held, it is impossible for more than one thought to remain vibrating in the mind at a time. You will experience that when the nerve currents are quieted through diaphragmatic breathing, it is impossible to be frustrated, and it is possible to absorb within yourself, into the great halls of inner learning, into the great vacuum within you, all of your problems, troubles and fears, without having to psychoanalyze them.

Through the regular practice of scriptural study, which is a vital part of your daily sadhana vigil, you will soon find that it is possible to touch into your subsuperconscious mind and complement that study with your own inner knowing. After you are well established in your sadhana, you will enjoy a greater ability to discipline your body, your breath, your nerve system and your mind.

We first have to learn that in order to control the breath, we have to study and understand the breath, the lungs, how the body is constructed and how the pranas move through it. This enables us to understand the subtle system within the body that controls the thinking mind. Then we are ready to study the mind in its totality.

### The Five States of Mind

The conscious mind is our external mind. The subconscious mind contains our memory patterns and all impressions of the past. The sub of the subconscious mind holds the seeds of karmas that are not yet manifest. The subsuperconscious mind works through the subconscious



HINDUISM TODAY

## CANGA SADHANA

Sit by a river and listen to the river saying "Aum Namah Sivaya, Sivaya Namah Aum," as its water runs over the rocks. Listen closely to the water connecting to the rocks and you will hear the sacred mantra of life, "Aum Namah Sivaya." Relax into the sounds and try to be in tune with the perfect universe. The cosmos is perfect, you know. Its laws are divine, its timing flawless, its design unique. While you are sitting alone by the side of the river being one with the perfect universe—the earth, the air, the fire, the water and the akasha, the mind—when a thought arises from your subconscious, something about your daily life, a problem or difficulty, pluck a leaf from a tree or bush, mentally put the problem into the leaf and place it into the river. The river will carry the leaf away along with the thought you placed into it. Then pluck a flower and humbly offer it into the river with both hands in loving appreciation for doing this great service for you. Remember, the outer river is symbolically representing the inner river of your own nerve system, life force and consciousness that flows through you night and day. So, as you look upon the water, in a mystical way, see it as your own superconscious energies, taking away these problems, worries, doubts, ill-conceived and unresolved experiences of the past. Flow with the river of life, and merge in Siva's ocean of oneness.



NARAYANI PEEDAM





Hummed over and over, more does the tune appeal. Eaten over and over, even neem becomes sweet. From sadhana, works result in the world. Beloved of the Bounteous, Vema, listen.

MEMANA, 17TH CENTURY MYSTIC

We could have a million sadhanas, and we do. Every word is a sadhana, every movement is a sadhana. There are those that flow back into the elements, such as cutting the vegetable by honoring the lifeline, or washing the grains by understanding their life force, their cosmic sentiency. Sadhana brings us to a place that is clear and serene so that we can sit in ourselves—so that, for one untethered moment, we can be awareful of who we are.

SWAMI MAYATITANANDA

DREAMTIME



**Putting sadhana first in life:** (Left) A devotee meditates at dawn; (lower left) sacraments are prepared on a silver tray for morning puja; (right) reading from scripture after puja.



THOMAS KELLY

## THE DAILY VIGIL

To give sadhana its rightful place in your life, you must establish a daily vigil. The ideal time is early in the morning, just after bathing, before you start to think about the activities of the day, before you engage with the day's responsibilities and plans. A half hour is a good length for the vigil, but if that seems impractical, start with ten to twenty minutes. Plan a simple routine that you will follow each day, for example: a brief puja, japa, then meditation. A vigil held at the same time every day is an excellent way to budget the necessary time for sadhana in these busy modern times. Here is the traditional pattern: Each day hundreds of millions of Hindus awaken for the last fifth of the night, bathe, don fresh clothing, apply sectarian marks, called tilaka, and sit in a clean, quiet place for religious disciplines. Facing east or north, the devotional puja rites of bhakti yoga are performed. Hatha yoga, hymn singing, japa and chanting are often included. Then follows scriptural study and meditation, listening to the sound current and contemplating the moonlike inner light. The duly initiated practice advanced yogas, but only as directed by their guru. Through the day, karma yoga, selfless religious service, is performed at every opportunity. Besides these yogas of doing, Hindus practice the central yoga of being—living a joyful, positive, harmonious life.

mind, and intuition flows daily as a result. Creativity is there at your bidding. Your superconscious mind is where intuitive flashes occur. The accomplished mystic can consciously be in one country or another instantaneously, according to his will, once he has, through the grace of Lord Siva, attained a full inner knowing of how to remain in Satchidananda, the superconscious mind, consciously, without the other states interfering.

### Consistency Is the Key

Yes, sadhana begins in the home, and it begins with you. It must be practiced regularly, at the same time each day—not two hours one day, one hour the next and then forgetting about it for three or four days because you are too busy with external affairs, but every day, at the same time. Meeting this appointment with yourself is in itself a sadhana. In the technological age nearly everyone finds it difficult to set one hour aside in which to perform sadhana. This is why in your sadhana *vrata*, or vow, you promise to dedicate only one half hour a day. In the agricultural era, it was easy to find time to perform sadhana two to three hours a day. Why? The demands of external life were not as great as they are now, in the technological age.

Brahmacharis and brahmacharinis, celibate men and women, in their respective gurukulas dedicate their time to the performance of sadhana. They rise together early in the morning, perform their sadhana as a group, and then are off to their daily work. The regular practice of sadhana, they have found, enables them to get along admirably well with one another because of their newly acquired abilities of absorbing their difficulties, thus avoiding argument and confrontation. In these *gurukulas*, found worldwide, various kinds of sadhanas are performed, such as scriptural study, chanting the names of the Lord on the japa beads, group chanting of bhajanas, the singing

of *Devarams* and the yogic concentration of holding the mind fixed on one point and bringing it back to that one point each time it wanders. The more disciplined *gurukulas* religiously administrate group sadhana at the same time each day, every day without fail. Daily life revolves around this period of sadhana, just as in a religious Saivite home life revolves around the shrine room and each one's daily personal vigil.

### What Comes First in Your Life?

Ask yourself what you put first in your daily life. Do your emotions come first? Does your intellect come first? Do your instinctive impulses come first? Does your striving to overcome worries and fears and doubt come first inside of you? Does your creativity, your love for all humanity, your search for God and peace within yourself come first inside of you? What are your priorities?

### Questions and Challenges

When you first begin your daily sadhana, it is likely to begin in an awkward way, and you may come to know yourself in a way that you don't want to know yourself. Don't be discouraged when the mind runs wild as you sit quietly and are unable to control it. Don't be discouraged if you find that you are unable to even choose a time to sit quietly for one-half hour on a regular daily basis. If you persist, soon all this will be overcome and a firmness of mind will be felt, for it is through the regular practice of sadhana that the mind becomes firm and the intellect pure. It is through the regular practice of concentration that awareness detaches itself from the external mind and hovers within, internalizing the knowledge of the physical body, the breath



NARAYANI PEEDAM

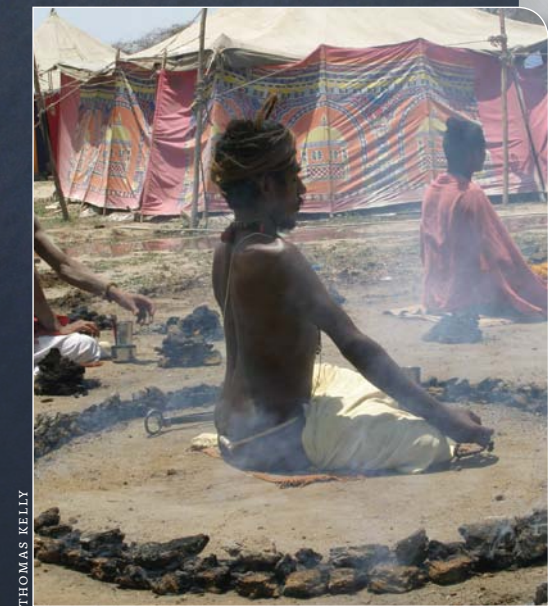




## WRITING AS SADHANA

Sri Chinmoy often encouraged us to write about the spiritual life, about our experiences with Guru. There can be something intimidating about writing that first sentence, but once we clear some space and devote it to writing, we can often be surprised at how beneficial writing is. I feel it is somewhat like talking to new disciples. As Guru says, when we talk to new seekers, it brings to the fore our good qualities and reminds our forgetful mind of all the many good experiences we have had in the spiritual life. It is the same with writing; it helps us to relive profound experiences and strengthen our aspiration.

TEJVAN, A DEVOTEE OF SRI CHINMOY



THOMAS KELLY

and the emotions. Concentration of the forces of the body, mind and emotions brings us automatically into meditation, *dhyana*, and into deeper internalized awareness.

The spiritual practice should be reasonable, should not take up too much time, and should be done at the same time every day. Often seekers who become associated with Hindu sadhana go to extremes and proceed with great vigor in an effort to attain results immediately. Sitting two or three hours a day, they wear themselves out and then stop. Here's a formula for beginners: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, twenty minutes to a half an hour of sadhana at the same time every day; Saturday and Sunday, no sadhana.

The keys are moderation and consistency. Consistency is the key to the conquest of karma. If you go to extremes or are sporadic in your sadhana, you can easily slide backwards. What happens when you slide backwards? You become fearful, you become angry, you become jealous, you become confused. What happens when you move forward? You become brave, you become calm, you become self-confident and your mind is clear.

### The Benefits of Sadhana

It is often feared that meditation and religious devotion cause a withdrawal from the world. The practice of sadhana I have described does not detach you from or make you indifferent to the world. Rather, it brings up a strength within you, a shakti, enabling you to move the forces of the world in a positive way. What is meant by "moving the forces of the world"? That means fulfilling realistic goals that you set for yourself. That means performing your job as an employer or as an employee in the most excellent way possible. That means stretching your mind and emotions and endurance to the limit



HINDUISM TODAY

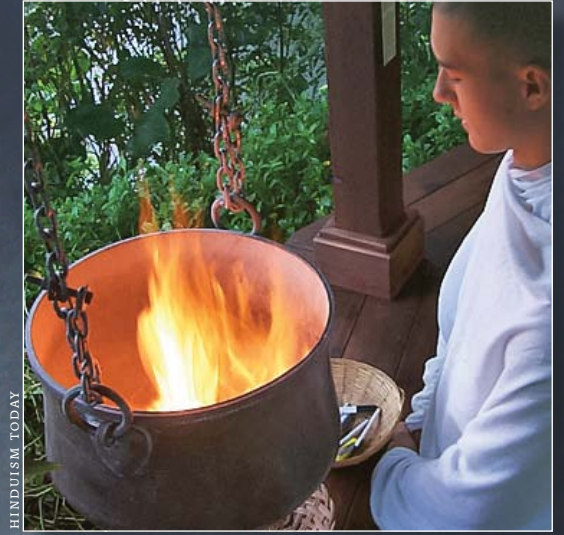
**Purification:** (Clockwise from above) A devotee writes down experiences that upset his equipoise; another seeker burns his written memories in a bronze cauldron; a young man sits in a ring of fire in the hot Ujjain sun, performing an extreme sadhana, or *tapas*, that grants control of the instincts; the mantra *Aum Namah Shivaya*, written in English and Tamil.

and therefore getting stronger and stronger day by day. You are involved in the world, and the world is in a technological age.

The sadhana that you perform will make your mind steady and your will strong so that you can move the forces of the physical world with love and understanding, rather than through anger, hatred, antagonism, cunning, jealousy and greed. Daily sadhana performed in the right way will help you overcome these instinctive barriers to peace of mind and the fullness of being. If you have children, the rewards of your sadhana will help you educate your children properly in fine schools and universities and see that all of their physical needs are met through the flow of material abundance that automatically comes as you progress in your inner life.

Through daily sadhana we shall come to know the body, we shall come to know the emotions, we shall come to know the nerve system, we shall come to know the breath, and we shall come to know the mind in its totality. Each one of you will soon be able to mentally pick up all of the dross of your subconscious, throw it within, into the great cavity of inner knowing at the feet of the Gods, there to be absorbed, dissolved and disappear. All this and more can be unfolded from within each one of you through your daily practice of sadhana. Sadhana is one of the great boons given to us in our religion.

When the devas within your home see you performing your sadhana each day, they give you psychic protection. They hover around you and keep away the extraneous thought forms that come from the homes of your neighbors or close friends and relatives. They all mentally chant "Aum Namah Shivaya," keeping the vibration of the home alive with high thoughts and mantras so that the atmosphere is scintillating, creating



HINDUISM TODAY

## SADHANAS OF PEN AND FIRE

Writing down problems and burning them in any ordinary fire brings them from the subconscious into the external mind, releasing the suppressed emotion as the fire consumes the paper. Write in detail, in one or more pages, your experiences and difficulties. When finished, burn it up in an ordinary fire. Watch Agni, the God of Fire, destroy the dross of your deep subconscious mind. Experience freedom from emotional burdens you have been carrying. Release the past. Anything can be written down that concerns you: friends, home, family, hurts, health, money, sex, work and regretted behaviors. The idea is to remove the emotions from the experience and bring yourself to the eternal now. Forgetting the past, concern yourself with the now, moving with life day to day. This subconscious journaling must be done by hand, with pen and paper. Writing is uniquely effective because in the process the prana from the memory flows from your subconscious through your hand, through the pen and is embedded in the paper, bringing the memory out in the open to be understood, defused and released when the paper is burned. *Lekhana japa* is another powerful sadhana, writing one's mantra over and over 108 or 1,008 times while meditating on the meaning.





Lead me from unreality  
to reality. Lead me from  
darkness to light. Lead me  
from death to immortality.

SHUKLA YAJUR VEDA,  
BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD 1.3.28

Perishable is matter.  
Immortal, imperishable  
the Lord, who, the One,  
controls the perishable and  
also the soul. Meditating  
on Him, uniting with Him,  
becoming more and more  
like Him, one is freed at the  
last from the world's illusion.

KRISHNA YAJUR VEDA,  
SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD 1.10



HINDUISM TODAY



DEVRAJ AGARWAL

for you a proper environment to delve within yourself. The fact that the devonic world is involved is one more good reason why you must choose a specific time for sadhana and religiously keep to that time each day, for you not only have an appointment with yourself but with the devas as well.

#### Experiential Religion

By performing the *pancha nitya karmas* (five obligatory duties), living the *yamas* and *niyamas* (cardinal virtues) to the best of your ability and performing your daily sadhana, your religion becomes closer and closer to you in your heart. You will soon begin to find that God Siva is within you as well as within the temple, because you become quiet enough to know this and experience that Lord Siva's superconscious mind is identical to yours; there is no difference in Satchidananda. From this state, you will experience the conscious mind as "the watcher" and experience its subconscious as the storehouse of intellectual and emotional memory patterns. In daily life you will begin to experience the creativity of the subsuperconscious mind, as the forces of the First World are motivated through love as you fulfill your chosen dharma in living with Siva.

Thus our religion is an experiential religion, from its beginning stages to the most advanced. You have already encountered the magic of the temple, and you have had uplifting experiences within your home shrine. Now, as you perform your sadhana, you will enjoy spiritual experiences within yourself on the path of self-transformation.

It is up to you to put your religion into practice. Feel the power of the Gods in the puja. If you don't feel them, if you are just going through ritual and don't feel anything, you are not awake. Get the most out of every experience that the temple offers, the guru offers, the devas offer, that your life's experiences, which you were born to live through, offer. In doing so, slowly the kundalini begins to loosen and imperceptibly rise into its yoga. That's what does the yoga; it's the kundalini seeking its source, like the tree growing, always reaching up to the Sun.

It is up to you to make the teachings a part of your life by working to understand each new concept as you persist in your daily religious practices. As a result, you will be able to brave the forces of the external world without



THOMAS KELLY

being disturbed by them and fulfill your dharma in whatever walk of life you have chosen. Because your daily sadhana has regulated your nerve system, the quality of your work in the world will improve, and your mood in performing it will be confident and serene.

When your sadhana takes hold, you may experience a profound calmness within yourself. This calmness that you experience as a result of your meditation is called Satchidananda, the natural state of the mind. To arrive at that state, the instinctive energies have been lifted to the heart chakra and beyond, and the mind has become absolutely quiet. This is because you are not using your memory faculty. You are not using your reason faculty. You are not trying to move the forces of the world with your willpower faculty. You are simply resting within yourself. Therefore, if you are ever bothered by the external part of you, simply return to this inner, peaceful state as often as you can. You might call it your "home base." From here you can have a clear perception of how you should behave in the external world, a clear perception of your future and a clear perception of the path ahead. This is a superconscious state, meaning "beyond normal consciousness." So, simply deepen this inner state by being aware that you are aware.

#### Control of the Pranas

A great flow of prana is beginning to occur among the families of our congregation worldwide because each one has decided to discipline himself or herself and the children to perform sadhana. That brings the prana under control. If the prana is not under the control of the individual, it is controlled by other individuals. The negative control of prana is a control, and positive control of prana is a control. That's why we say, "Seek good company," because if you can't control your prana, other people who do control their pranas can help you. The group helps the individual and the individual helps the group. If you mix with bad company, then the pranas begin to get disturbed. Once that happens, your energies are like a team of horses out of control. It takes a lot of skill and strength on the part of the individual to get those pranas back under control.

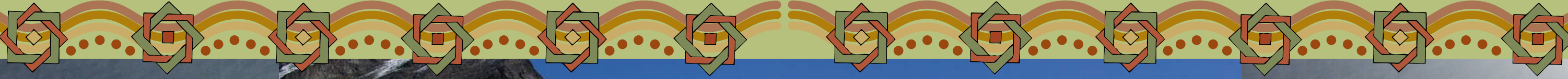
The control of prana is equally important on the inner planes. When you leave the physical body, you are in your astral body, your subtle body.

**Bowing to higher powers:** (Clockwise from left) A devotee touches the stone feet of Vishnu, seeking blessings at the Tirupati Temple; a woman prays while bathing in the river Ganga; in Hamm, Germany, men perform the arduous sadhana of rolling for two miles to the temple behind a chariot procession.

## COMPLETE SURRENDER

Each time you prostrate in the temple, do so in the spirit of *prapatti*, surrendering to the will of the Deity, in the spirit of giving up the lower energies to the higher energies. *Prapatti* is pure bhakti, total, unconditional submission to God, often coupled with the attitude of personal helplessness, self-effacement and resignation. The practice of yoga, too, is an expression of love of God, as it is only with God's grace that success is achieved. Rishi Tirumular states: "Unless your heart melts in the sweet ecstasy of love—my Lord, my treasure-trove, you can never possess" (*Tirumantiram* 272). It is in this concept of the need for self-effacement and total surrender, *prapatti*, that the members of all sects merge in oneness, at the fulfillment of their individual paths. Once the giving up of the lower is total, body and face on the ground, hands outstretched before the image of God, Gods or guru, those energies are surrendered into the higher chakras within the devotee—and it is a blissful moment—into the consciousness of "us and ours," "we and oneness," and inseparable love, thus claiming their individuality, not as a separate thing, but as a shared oneness with all. Thereafter, these devoted ones, having been transformed, are able to uplift others, to harmonize forces around them that they work with day after day, year after year after year.





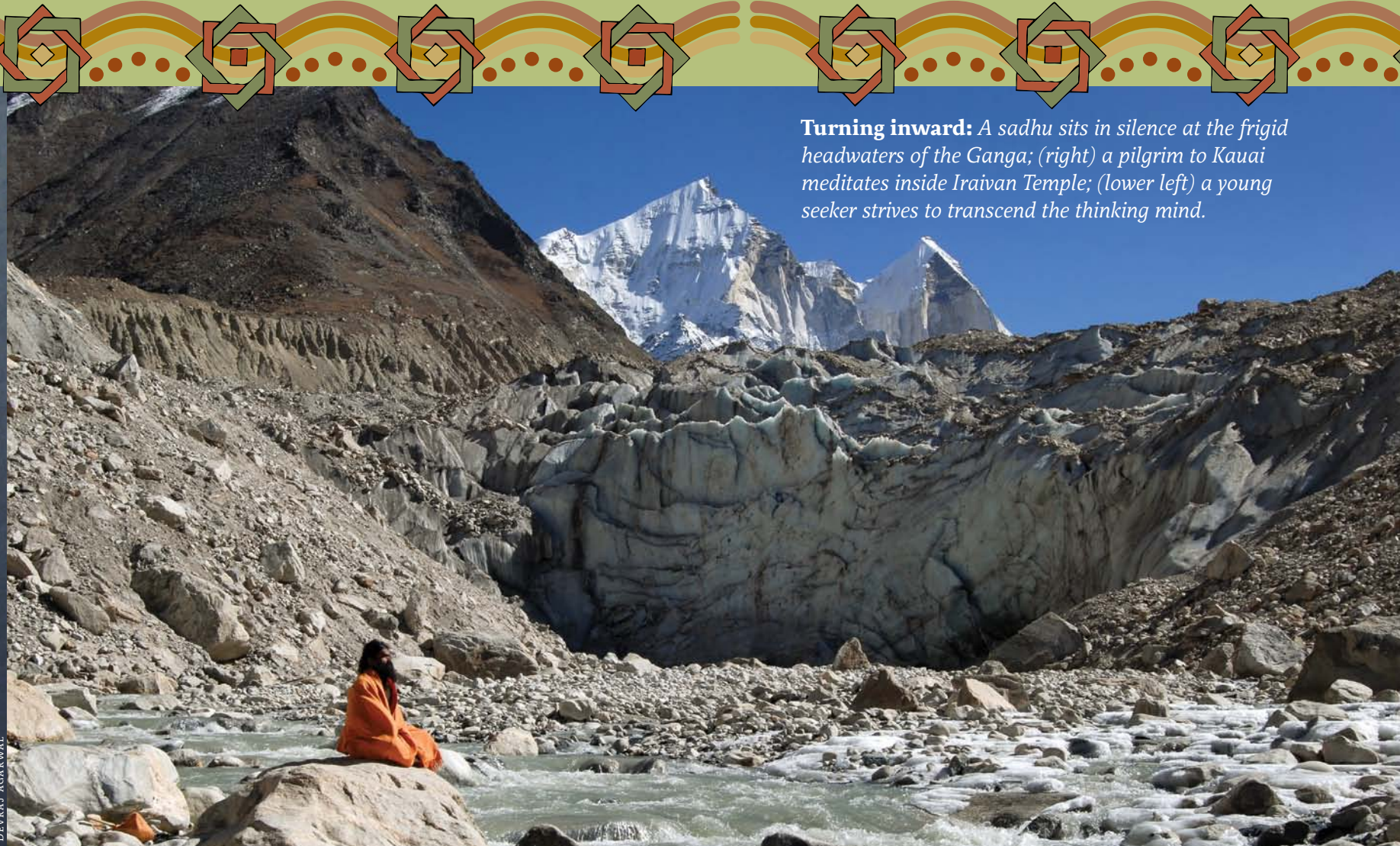
The Self cannot be attained by the weak, nor by the careless, nor through aimless disciplines. But if one who knows strives by right means, his soul enters the abode of God.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD 3.2.4

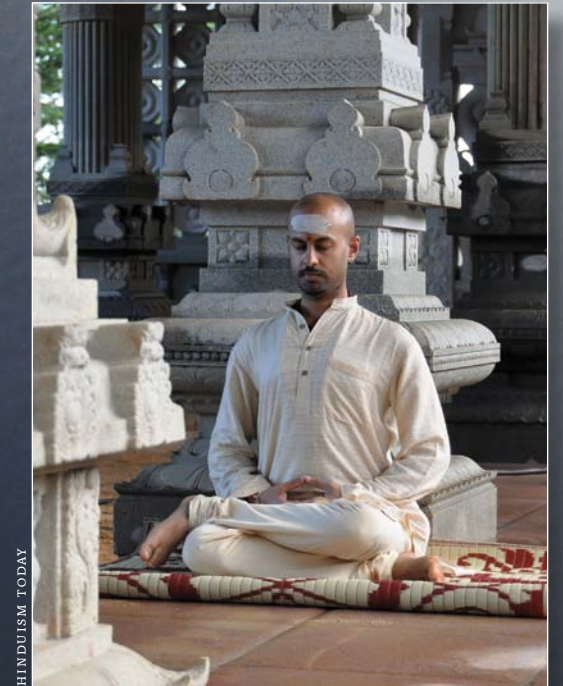
Just as light shines, dispelling darkness, so also the Supreme Self shines, dispelling ignorance. Just as a lamp spontaneously goes out if not fed with oil, so also the ego becomes extinct if one meditates unceasingly and becomes merged in the Self. There is no higher gain than the Self.

SARVAJNANOTTARA AGAMA

DEVRAJ AGARWAL



**Turning inward:** A sadhu sits in silence at the frigid headwaters of the Ganga; (right) a pilgrim to Kauai meditates inside Iraivan Temple; (lower left) a young seeker strives to transcend the thinking mind.



HINDUISM TODAY

## BE THE WITNESS

Begin the witness sadhana by walking and observing the details of every aspect of nature that you see—the colors and shapes of the plants, trees, water and other objects. Then sit for a while and be the witness of your thoughts. Try to be aware of everything you think about. Don't miss one topic of thought; identify them all. From the mystic's point of view, he is the watcher. And as the mirror is in no way discolored by what it reflects, so is the mystic in his perfected state—your perfected state, too, as the watcher is right there, deep within you. Yogaswami told a devotee: "When you are in meditation, watch the mind. Here and there the mind is hopping. One, two, three, a hundred. Follow him and note, he is going here. Now he is going there. You must not miss even a single one." As you sit in meditation, follow Yogaswami's advice and closely witness your thoughts. Be that stationary awareness. All you have to do is to watch your mind think. Then and only then are you experiencing your perfect state of inner being.

It is not made of flesh and bones like your physical body—as the Buddhists say, "thirty-two kinds of dirt wrapped up in skin." The astral body is made of prana. It floats. It can fly. It's guided by your mind, which is composed of more rarefied prana, actinic energy. Wherever you want to go, you'll be there immediately. And, of course, you do this in your sleep, in your dreams and after death. Many of you have had astral experiences and can testify how quickly you can move here and there when your astral body is detached from the physical body. However, if you don't have control of your prana, you don't have control of your astral body. Then where do you go when you drop off your physical body at death? You are magnetized to desires, uncontrollably magnetized to fulfilling unfulfilled desires. You are magnetized to groups of people who are fulfilling similar unfulfilled desires, and generally your consciousness goes down into lower chakras. Only in controlling your astral body do you have conscious control of your soul body, which is, of course, living within the astral body and resonating to the energy of the higher chakras.

My satguru, Siva Yogaswami, spoke of Saivism as the sadhana *marga*, "the path of striving," explaining that it is a religion not only to be studied but also to be lived. "See God everywhere. This is practice. First do it intellectually. Then you will know it." He taught that much knowledge comes through learning to interpret and understand the experiences of life. To avoid the sadhana *marga* is to avoid understanding the challenges of life. We must not fail to realize that each challenge is brought to us by our own actions of the past. Yes, our actions in the past have generated our life's experiences today. All Hindus accept karma and reincarnation intellectually, but the concepts are not active in their lives until they accept the responsibilities of their own actions and the experiences that follow. In doing so, no blame can fall upon another. It is all our own doing. This is the sadhana *marga*—the path

to perfection.

The sadhana *marga* leads us into the yoga *pada* quite naturally. But people don't study yoga. They are not taught yoga. They are taught sadhana, and if they don't perform it themselves—and no one can do it for them—they will never have a grip strong enough over their instinctive mind and intellectual mind to come onto the yoga *marga*, no matter how much they know about yoga. So, we don't learn yoga. We mature into it. We don't learn meditation. We awaken into it. You can teach meditation, you can teach yoga, but it's all just words unless the individual is mature and awake on the inside.

To be awake on the inside means waking up early in the morning. You woke up early this morning. That may have been difficult. But you got the body up, you got the emotions up, you got the mind up, and your instinctive mind did not want to do all that. Did it? No! Spiritual life is a twenty-four-hour-a-day vigil.

### Sadhana and Life's Stages

Devotees who are doing sadhana and who are in the *grihastha ashrama*, between age twenty-four and forty-eight, should move the forces of the world rightly, dynamically, intelligently, quickly and make something of their lives. Such devotees should not be stimulated by competition. In today's world most people have to be stimulated by competition to produce anything worthwhile, even if that means hurting other people. They have to be stimulated by conflict to produce anything worthy of producing in the world, and that hurts other people. They have to be stimulated by their home's breaking up, and that hurts other people. And they have to be stimulated by all kinds of other lower emotions to be able to get enough energy to move the forces of the world



DREAMTIME



With firm faith, practical application, perseverance, careful attention to even small details, and fortitude in trials, you must set foot and proceed on the path of sadhana.

SWAMI SIVANANDA

### Efforts at transcendence:

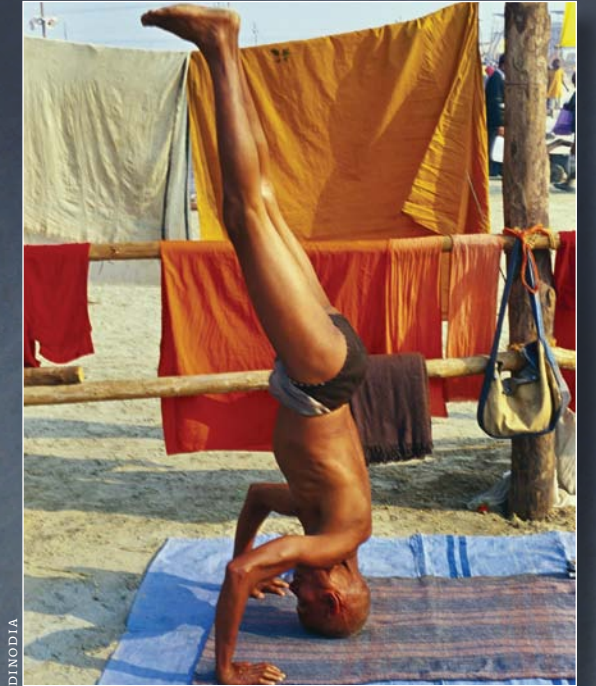
(Clockwise from below) A pilgrim treks alone to sacred sites in the Himalayas; as he commences his puja, a priest performs a hand mudra while visualizing his guru's feet resting lightly on top of his head, blessing him; two sisters honor the Ganga's rushing waters at Haridwar during a Kumbha Mela; hatha yoga performed powerfully as a sadhana.



NARAYANI PEEDAM



SHUTTERSTOCK



DINODIA

## HATHA YOGA AS SADHANA

For millions, the practice of hatha yoga is the central spiritual enterprise. The most ardent devote themselves to hours of practice each day. The yoga slowly molds body and mind into a more perfect union. Hatha yoga renews the nerve system, releases toxins that dull the senses and diminish vitality, awakens self-awareness and prepares the seeker for meditation. There is much purification of body and mind when hatha yoga is engaged seriously and with disciplined regularity. Like a fine dancer, the yogi is reaching ever new heights of physical and mental balance. Certain masters use the ancient poses to build a disciple's willpower, driving him to ever greater accomplishments, a path that seems physical, but, at its heart, is far more. Hatha yoga sadhanas often include advanced forms of breath control, called *pranayama*. In these, the breath is used to control the forces of life as awareness is quieted, senses withdrawn, appetites harnessed, willpower strengthened and the mind loosened. Such extreme practices are wisely amplified by other sadhanas and always guided by an experienced guru.

to do something, whether it be good or bad. Those who perform sadhana draw on the forces of the soul to move the forces of the world and make a difference.

It is during the latter stages of life that family devotees have the opportunity to intensify their sadhana and give back to society of their experience, their knowledge and their wisdom gained through the first two *ashramas*. The *vanaprastha ashrama*, age forty-eight to seventy-two, is a very important stage of life, because that is the time when you can inspire excellence in the *brahmacharya* students and in the families, to see that their life goes along as it should. Later, the *sannyasa ashrama*, beginning at seventy-two, is the time to enjoy and deepen whatever realizations you have had along the way. We are all human beings, and every one of us—including the *sapta* rishis, seven great sages who help guide the course of mankind from the inner planes—is duty bound to help everyone else. That is the duty. It must be performed by everyone. If you want to help somebody else, perform regular sadhana.

Traditionally, a Hindu home should be a reflection of the monastery that the family is attached to, with a regular routine for the mother, the father, the sons, the daughters, so that everyone is fulfilling their rigorous duties and sadhanas to the very best of their ability.

We had a seventeen-year-old youth here as a guest in our monastery from one of our families in Malaysia that performs sadhana. That sadhana enabled him to come here to perform sadhana. If his parents had not been performing sadhana in their home regularly, he would not have been inclined to come here and perform a more strenuous sadhana with us.

I was asked recently what to do about all the things that you cannot avoid listening to and seeing on the TV and news and reading about—atrocities,

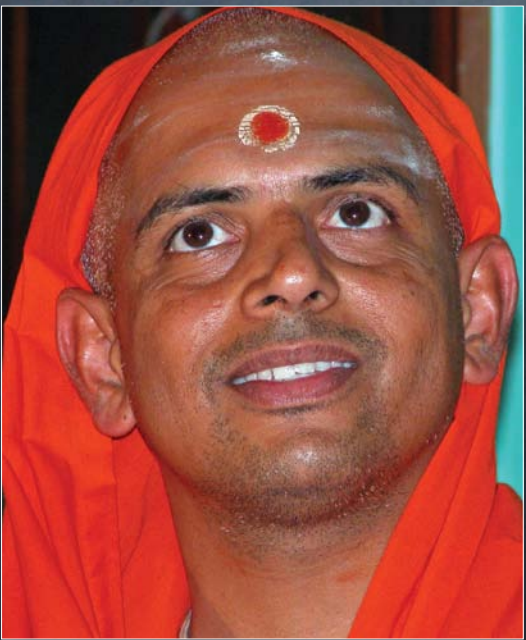
crime, murders, poverty, unfairness—which may tend to disturb one's sadhana. To perform good sadhana, we have to have a good philosophical foundation. A good philosophical foundation allows us to understand why we have the highest and the lowest human expressions here on planet Earth. Philosophers and mystics have for centuries said, "Only on planet Earth in a physical body can you realize the Self, because only here, in this world, do you have all twenty-one chakras functioning." You need the lowest in order to realize the highest. Some people are born peaceful because of merits attained in past lives. They are born helpful, and they are the uplifters of mankind. Others are born angry, scheming, conniving, resentful, and they are the doubters, the detractors, of mankind. But all have an equal place here on planet Earth. All are going through a similar evolution up the spinal column to the top of the head, through the door of Brahman and finally out.

From the Western religionist's point of view, God is doing it all. He is punishing mankind. He is helping mankind. And many Hindus who were raised in Christian schools hold that perspective. But from the perspective of Sanatana Dharma, the oldest religion in the world, we do it all. By our karmas we are creating our future this very moment. So, as you proceed in your sadhana, disconnect from the lower and proceed into the higher. As a family person, it is your dharma to serve society, uplift mankind and help relieve human suffering within your sphere of influence. But do not try to fix, or even entertain the desire to fix, that which you cannot fix, which is the karma, the action and reaction, of individuals who are going through the lower phases of life and must experience what they are experiencing and which you read about and hear about daily in newspapers, on TV and on the Internet.



ISTOCKPHOTO





## FASTING AND SECLUSION

He who knows God as the Life of life, the Eye of the eye, the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind—he indeed comprehends fully the Cause of all causes.

BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD 4.4.18



**In touch with Life:** (Left to right) Sri Jayendra Puri Swami; the caves he built at the ashram to encourage solitary sadhana; the 15 clay pots grow smaller each day, until the faster eats a single bite from this tiny one; in a novel sculpture, man shakes hands with nature

### Sri Jayendra Puri Swami, Spiritual Head of Sri Kailash Ashram, Bengaluru, India, Speaks on Sadhana

Interview by Choodie Shivaram, Bengaluru

IN OUR ANCIENT SCRIPTURES, THE RISHIS POINT OUT THAT ACTIVITY is a basic tendency of the human being. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna says that activity is born out of nature, inherited from nature, and this tendency continuously prompts us towards activity. The result of activity, which is karma, according to the *Gita*, has three types of fruits: the desired fruit, the undesired fruit and a mixture of both.

When the fruit of a certain action is conducive to joy and happiness, I naturally continue that action. If it is averse to me, then I desist from that action. This process goes on right from the birth of every human being. Thus, desire and non-desire drive our actions. That is how development takes place. Our great rishis referred to this as *heya* and *upadeya*. *Upadeya* is the force of inclination toward what we want. *Heya* is the force of aversion from what we do not want.

We aspire continuously for a sense of bliss, for uninterrupted joy. But achieving that bliss is not so easy. Nature is constantly changing, the external reality is changing, and the mind of the individual is also changing. What we like today we may not like tomorrow. We are prone to continuous change. In between this swirl of change is sadhana. It is sadhana that brings us the eternal, undiminishing bliss that the rishis have experienced and called by various names: Shivam, Satyam, Sundaram, Parabrahma, Swarupam, Devi, Narayana, Satchidananda.

Adi Shankara wrote: "That benefit which is superseded by no other benefit, that joy which is superseded by no other joy, that knowledge which is superseded by no other knowledge—the attainment of that bliss comes through sadhana." *Sadhana* means to achieve by effort. People who have reached that attainment are called *siddhas*. Our activities are continuously bringing us a combination of *sukha* and *dukha*, joy and sorrow. Sadhana directs us towards *parama-sukha*,

the ultimate bliss that transcends the joys and sorrows of this world.

The various types of sadhana and when and how they are to be done is discussed in our *Vedas*, *Agamas*, *Puranas* and the auxiliary texts. Specific sadhanas, or spiritual practices, are mentioned for people who want faster advancement. These are referred to as *yajnas*. *Dravya yajna* is continuous performance of *homas*. *Tapo yajna* is severe penance, dwelling in solitude, engaged in meditation and japa while abstaining from the pleasures of life. *Hatha yoga yajna* is perfecting the yoga *asanas*, or postures. *Svadyaya yajna* is studying scripture. *Jnana yajna* is the continuous questioning of oneself, inquiring "Who am I?" as exemplified by Ramana Maharshi, or asserting "I am That."

In our *Puranas*, the rishis have indicated the importance of *vrata*, or vow. The *vrata* of King Harischandra was *satya*, truthfulness. The *vrata* of Mahatma Gandhi was also truth. Abstinence is another common type of vow, such as refraining from eating a type of food that one likes immensely. Restraint itself is a form of sadhana. A person can do abstract sadhana in daily life without anybody knowing that he is doing it.

There are various forms of sadhana: meditation, bhajans, japa, pujas, etc., but at some time you will find the necessity of isolation. That is the purpose of the sadhana caves we built here at Kailash Ashram. They are for one type of sadhana: solitary confinement. Isolation is a must for a higher level of achievement. These seven caves are not for daily use in just any manner. We have had many people request permission to stay in a cave, but we have been very selective. The caves are not for the curious or uncommitted. Complete medical tests are required, and each candidate must first spend 15 days living at the ashram in a communal room in preparation for his time of solitude. The scriptures say that out of ten million people, only one will be a serious sadhaka. The caves are here for the serious sadhakas who

come to use them.

The ideal time alone in a cave is one month. We have prepared a special discipline for this, a regimen of fasting called *chandrayana vrata*. This fast consists of simple food—served in clay pots, one designed for each day—that diminishes in portion to the size of a thumb on the new-moon day. Then the size of the pots gradually increases until the full-moon day, at which time the person comes out of the cave. Throughout the fast, only one type of food is given—*kichari*, a balanced porridge of rice, dal and vegetables. This monotonous diet prevents desire from being directed toward eating.

The urge to perform sadhana arises with the thought that there must be something beyond the fluctuating joys and sorrows of this material world. When you want to achieve something greater, you naturally begin performing sadhana. A person who has been scorched by the heat of this world seeks solace in the ultimate.

A scientist achieves his goals because he questions continuously. Similarly, we must question continuously: "Where have I come from?" "Who am I?" "What is the purpose of my life?" This will lead us to bliss. Sadhana is absolute experimentation upon oneself to find the answer to something that is continuously troubling or intriguing us from within. It is the meticulous pursuit of a discipline that will lead you to higher goals. A guru is supremely important in this pursuit, because he removes ignorance.

The more difficulties you have and overcome while performing sadhana, the faster you progress. Successfully performing a certain *vrata* amidst difficulties and day-to-day affairs gives you wonderful self-confidence. Self-confidence is the key to sadhana. In traditional households, fasting and *mauna* (silence) was a form of *vrata*, or sadhana. Such *vratas* are still valid today and offer excellent means for advancement. In modern parlance "retreat" is a period of sadhana. Retreat is a must for everybody. It should include satsang, self-study, japa and a controlled diet. The retreat should be planned with the guidance of a master.

## BEING THE LIFE OF LIFE

Step one of this sadhana is to look into a mirror with the purpose of seeing your soul. This is done by looking into your eyes and seeing the sparkle, the pure life energy within them. Step two is to wander in a park and look at the humans and the nature that surrounds you and focus on the life within all—the people, plants, trees, animals, fish and birds. Step three is to focus so intently on the life in these forms that you become aware of God as the sense of oneness that pervades them all, the "Life of life." Consider yourself the same as others and not separate. You are in everyone. Focus on the underlying unitary consciousness that is found in the essence of the soul. In this perspective, there is only one being, not a group of separate individuals. We are the undying consciousness and energy flowing through all things. Deep inside we are perfect this very moment, and we have only to discover and live up to this perfection to be whole. Our energy and God's energy are the same, ever coming out of the void. We are all beautiful children of God. Each day we should try to see the life energy in trees, birds, animals and people. When we do, we are seeing God Siva in action.





ALL PHOTOS: PADMAJA PATEL

## FOOD

# Pack Your Kid an Awesome Veggie Lunch

There's no need to leave your child at the mercy of the school cafeteria; with a little creativity, you can provide a wholesome Indian meal every day

BY DR. PADMAJA PATEL, MIDLAND, TEXAS

IT'S EVERY MOTHER'S WORST NIGHTMARE: her child coming home from school in tears, mercilessly ridiculed by the other children, or even accidentally insulted by a teacher. My daughter Pooja recalls coming home one day from kindergarten feeling ashamed. "Embarrassed, I explained to my mother how one of my classmates had called my lunch 'disgusting.' After this encounter, Mom made a conscious effort to come up with more creative menu ideas as well as proper packing for my school lunch." Another Indian child I know was mortified when a teacher noticed spilled food from a container in his lunch box and said, "Ugh, that smells terrible."

### Lunch: It's More than a Meal

Welcome to the ritual of the American school lunch, something each mother deals with for a full thirteen years per child. In elementary school, some parents just throw a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a juice box into a paper sack and send their

kids off. Later, many children buy lunch in the school cafeteria. School cafeterias, however, have a justly deserved reputation for serving unhealthy foods, high in salt and fat, short on vegetables. The average cafeteria menu includes outright "junk food" items such as pepperoni and cheese pizza, popcorn, chicken, steak fingers, chicken nuggets, nachos, etc. There is little suitable for the health conscious and even less for vegetarians. Unless your school is unusual, their cafeteria is just not serving the healthy meals most Hindu mothers want their children to eat.

Among those working to bring better nutrition into the schools is Ann Cooper. As head chef for the Berkeley, California, school district, Ms. Cooper has transformed school lunch menus. Watch her 2007 report explaining the alarming health hazards of school cafeteria food and the steps she took in Berkeley—as well as those she feels America must take as a nation—at [bit.ly/school-lunches](http://bit.ly/school-lunches).

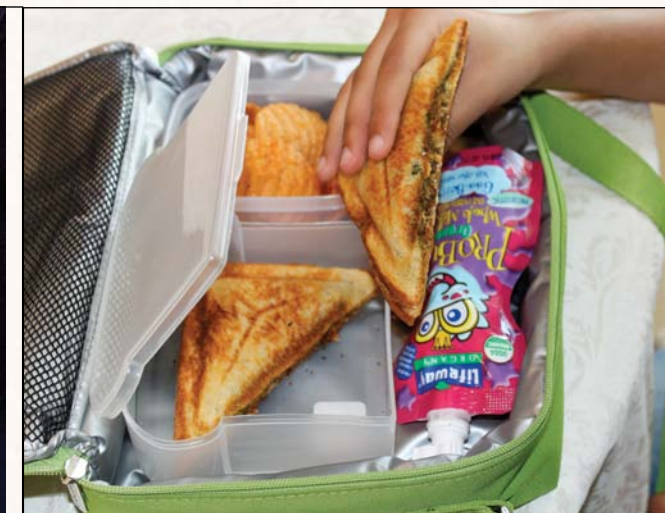
It's important to understand something else about American schools. In middle

school and high school, lunch break becomes increasingly important for the children's social life. As portrayed in the film *Mean Girls*, a high school cafeteria can be mapped by where, every day, the school's different social groups sit at specific tables. Schoolchildren segregate themselves in various ways: 1) by interests and abilities—athletes, nerds, "popular," delinquents, etc.; 2) by race—whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Middle Eastern; 3) by class—freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors and/or 4) by gender—boys and girls.

Just as much as who she is, what clothes she wears and where she sits, what your child eats for lunch is part of this social dynamic. Exotic Indian food from home can provoke derision and make her an outsider.

### What's a Mom to Do?

Most lunches from home are simple: a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or a cheese and meat sandwich, plus chips, an apple, a candy bar and a drink. Some time-pressed parents buy pre-made lunches from the local store called "Lunchables." These are made



**High school food:** (clockwise from left) Padmaja Patel's samosa lunch for daughter Pooja; teens paying for lunch at a Florida high school (where pizza is considered one of the four food groups and ketchup a vegetable!); grilled homemade vegetable pattie and cheese sandwich, minestrone soup, stuffed aloo paratha and a Mexican wrap.

by Oscar Mayer, also known for its hot dogs, bologna and bacon products, and are as unhealthy as you might suspect. British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver roundly criticized Oscar Mayer's "Lunchables" on his April 23, 2010, show as part of his campaign against the use of processed foods in national schools, in both the UK and America. "I hate these things," he said. "If you want to give your kids a good nutritious lunch, you don't give them Lunchables."

But if we prepare our child a super Indian meal, our efforts may backfire. Our children may be ridiculed for bringing foods that seem unappetizing to other children unfamiliar with the aromas of the herbs and spices central to Indian cooking. Indian food is different in appearance from the foods that most kids in this country are accustomed to seeing and eating. Therefore, it is not advisable to choose exactly the same foods we serve at home. But with a bit of innovation, I believe we can prepare a lunch that is not merely acceptable, but the envy of your children's friends.

### The Solution

As the mother of a teenager who refuses to eat cafeteria food, I know the challenges moms everywhere face when it comes to preparing healthy vegetarian meal options for school lunches.

Recipes can be endless, and every child has his or her own personal likes and dislikes, but one general key is to avoid packing food with a strong smell, foods that are overly greasy or oily, or food that cannot be conveniently eaten, either with utensils or with the hands. Preferably, each item should be packed individually in small, separate leak-proof containers. I bought the lunch box kit

shown on page 70 for \$10 at [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com). It's insulated, stylish and has attractive, colorful plastic containers of perfect size made from BPA-free polypropylene. High school children usually prefer a brown paper sack to a lunch box, but you can still use the same containers.

I've devised a set of lunch menu options that have proved popular with my daughter and her friends.

*For an Indian style main course:*

- 1) Parathas stuffed with aloo (spiced potato) and tofu or with spinach and paneer cheese.
- 2) Homemade baked (not deep fried) samosas with potato stuffing and mung and chana dal.
- 3) Homemade vegetable pattie (mixed veggies, potato, soy beans or chickpeas with salt, green chili, ginger and lemon) used in a grilled or toasted sandwich (bread, slice of cheese or cheese spread, green chutney (made from mint, coriander, green chillies, salt, ginger and lemon) and butter

*For an international style main course:*

- 1) Cold pasta with vegetables and chick peas and garlic bread.
  - 2) Mexican wrap, a tomato, basil or spinach tortilla stuffed with Mexican rice, black beans, sour cream, tomatoes, lettuce, etc.
  - 3) A rich minestrone soup and bread.
- For side dishes, I include one or two of: chips, carrots and dip, fruit, cheese sticks, yogurt or cookies. And for a drink: juice, yogurt smoothie or milk.

Each meal option is nutritious, appealing and tasty. They are not only acceptable at school, I now get asked to prepare larger quantities of the items that my daughter's friends find especially enjoyable!



Padmaja Patel, MD, was born in Gujarat, India. She has lived in Texas for the last 12 years with her daughter and husband. E-mail: [mrunalpadi@gmail.com](mailto:mrunalpadi@gmail.com)



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Bollywood Weddings

**K**AVITA RAMDYA PROPOSES THAT A new marriage paradigm has taken hold amongst our second-generation in *Bollywood Weddings: Dating, Engagement, and Marriage in Hindu America*. Dr. Ramdya, an independent researcher in American studies, explores the working dynamic of the Indian-American engagement and wedding. The London-based author conducted her field work—if the term applies—in New York City where she attended ten weddings and receptions, starting with her own in 2005.

In her work the writer openly, quizzically and honestly peers into the depths and subtleties of the marital patterns of Indian-American Hindus from the latter half of the twentieth century to today. Ramdya's research and findings are enhanced by wedding couples' personal thoughts and interviews. It is a fascinating interplay, mingling contrasting insights in an exposé on the symbiotic rapport of Indian and American marriage customs, from the first meeting to the reception party. *Bollywood Weddings* also goes beyond marital culture into what it's like to be a second generation Hindu in the US. It's a rich commentary on American sociology and the Indian-American experience as a whole.

"Although the focus in this book is nego-



## BOLLYWOOD WEDDINGS

DATING, ENGAGEMENT, AND MARRIAGE IN HINDU AMERICA  
KAVITA RAMDYA

tiating engagement and marriage," she explains in her introduction, "I am interested more broadly in the negotiation of culture. I look at marriage to make sense of how second-generation Indian-American Hindus negotiate two vastly different cultures that represent dichotomous sets of values."

Ramdya discovered "an unexpected third culture"—weddings with attributes both ancient and modern, both East and West. At one extreme was the marriage of Savita and Dev when they were still graduate students. They rejected the family's desire for a large Hindu wedding conducted by a priest and

opted for a simple civil ceremony at a friend's house conducted by a magistrate, also a friend. But that didn't mean they were going to leave tradition out altogether. "Theirs is one of three [of the ten] where the bride and groom were interested in not only displaying their Indian heritage at their ceremony by invoking Hindu spirituality and having friends perform the tabla, but also conveying their symbolic ethnic American values by walking down an aisle and reciting vows."

At the other end of the spectrum was Hamsa and Nalin's wedding in which the groom rode in on a white horse, followed by dancing and clapping guests—just like you would experience in Gujarat. The ceremony was straight out of India, with one addition, a walk down the aisle. Reports Ramdya, "Hamsa's walk down the aisle conveys her symbolic ethnic American capital in her otherwise Indian-Hindu wedding ceremony. Still, Hamsa stressed the authenticity of her wedding and reveled in her guests' wonderment at her pure Hindu wedding ceremony." The reception that followed was a "hybrid American-Bollywood event. The Beatles, Western wedding songs, Indian bhangra and Bollywood film music were all played and performed."

Drawing in *Bollywood Weddings* what she calls "surprising conclusions," Dr. Ramdya discovered, "instead of choosing either India or America, this [second-generation of Indian-American Hindus] embraces both cultures in the search for a spouse, marriage proposal and wedding planning."

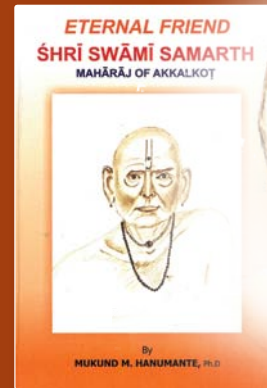
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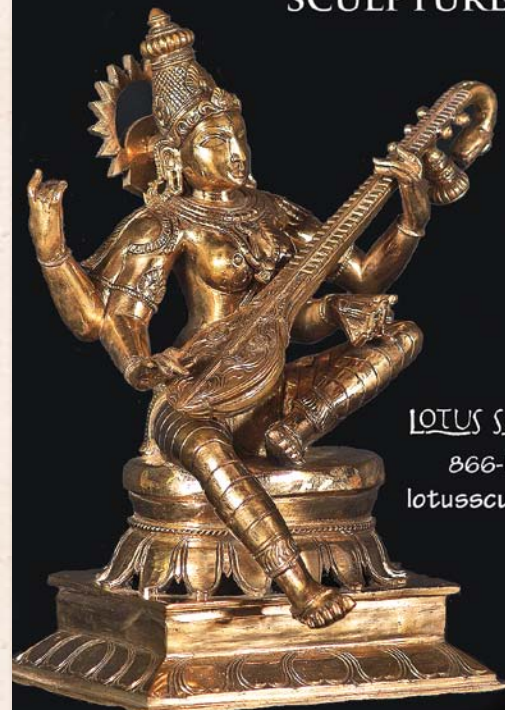
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# Hindu Heritage Endowment

## THIS SAN DIEGO DEVOTEE BRINGS HINDU TEXTS TO THE BLIND

The Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW) has 200 centers throughout the US and Canada that each year distribute 250,000 Braille volumes of Christian literature throughout the world.

The Hindu community has Damara Shanmugan and the Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired at the Hindu Heritage Endowment, which supports her work. The 64-year-old retired phone-company worker produces Braille versions of the writings of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami for blind children and adults. Her Braille venture has its roots in a 1995-1996 pilgrimage to Malaysia and then to South India where she spent two weeks volunteering at the Karnataka School for the Blind. The life-long San Diego resident and mother of two has since “transcribed” Gurudeva’s 3,000-page Master Course and some of his other works into Braille. She uses a Romeo RB-25 portable embosser driven by a computer program called Braille2000. Damara lives and works out of her 91-year-old mother’s 1,200 square foot home on a large San Diego lot shaded by fruit and walnut trees. “I’ve had dyslexia all my life,” Damara said cheerfully. “That’s why I need the computer program to do the work.” Her Braille transcription of religious works evolved gradually. The seed was planted as she was leaving India when a blind child beseeched her, “Auntie, send us some Braille books.”

“They had so few resources,” Damara recalled, describing a tiny Braille library at the school for the blind where she stayed as a volunteer. The library had only 100 Braille volumes, which equal just a handful of books, since one average book translates into several 80-page volumes in Braille. Back home, Damara learned that the Braille Transcribers Guild of San Diego in Balboa Park was disposing of Braille books made obsolete by cassettes and other technology. She used her pickup truck to collect some 5,000 volumes—versions of Reader’s Digest and other popular publications—and mailed them to South India. The Karnataka school built a small room to store them. “You can mail material for the blind for free,” she said, describing the one thing about her work that doesn’t seem expensive, cumbersome or loud. Braille paper is four times the thickness of ordinary stock, the books are held together with extra thick comb spines, and the noisy embossing is a snail’s paced, one-page-a-minute process.

In 1996 she began thinking of producing Hindu religious works. “My Braille teacher told me there are hardly any works from the Eastern world in Braille, let alone sacred Eastern texts. There are thousands of Braille versions of the Christian Bible,” she said. “There are none of the Vedas.” As Damara gained facility in Braille, she asked Gurudeva for permission to transcribe and distribute his writings to the blind. He readily agreed. She began with some of his popular pamphlets, and since then has completed his Master Course of Dancing with Siva, Living with Siva and Merging with Siva. Each book of that trilogy takes up twenty Braille volumes.

“Braille works fit present-day India better than cassettes or CDs. You can’t depend on consistent power from the balky Indian grid,” she said, and “electricity costs money. Besides, the blind are like the rest of us. They like to sit down with a good book.”

To learn how you can support Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired (fund #43) through a will, life insurance or other planned gifts, contact Shanmuganathaswami at 808-822-3012, ext. 244 or e-mail [bhe@hindu.org](mailto:bhe@hindu.org). Donate to fund #43 at [www.hheonline.org](http://www.hheonline.org).



Damara Shanmugan holds a Braille book

## JULY TO SEPTEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment</b>		
Tina Desai	300.00	
Rajan Deva	50.00	
Sharad & Namrata Haldwania	101.00	
Roshan Harilela	375.00	
Gunasekaran Kandasamy	339.19	
Natraj Narayanswami	15.50	
Anonymous	175.00	
K. Lakshmi Kantha Reddy	500.00	
Niraj Thaker	76.50	
Michael Zimmermann	7.50	
Other Donations	23,000.00	
Total	24,939.69	

<b>Iraivan Temple Endowment</b>		
Thushyanthan Amirthalingam	290.00	
Latha Kannan	153.00	
Ramrajeeth Kodialbail	1,001.00	
Nalini Ganapati Kodpadi	25.00	
Maragatham Kumar	62.00	
Gunness Mahara	1,000.00	
Vijendra & Atrun Prasad	25.00	
Anonymous	1,008.00	
Sankara Skandanatha	120.00	
Pregassen Soobramaney	40.00	
Niraj Thaker	76.50	
Raja Vishnu	56.67	
Other Donations	70,378.04	
Total	74,235.21	

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund</b>		
Aubrey Burke	93.30	
Visen Candasamy	43.62	
Gunavadee Caremben	2.48	
Somasundaram Caremben	6.44	
Sukanta Caremben	2.48	
Sharath Chigurupati	369.00	
Tirunyanam Gunasegaran	64.48	
Mootocurpen Harrykrishna	250.00	
Dinesh Kumar Jayaram	9.43	
Victoria Lynne Johnson	17.00	
Juhivaasana Koothan	4.99	
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Bala Krishna	52.58	
Shakti Mahadevan	108.00	
Gaurav Malhotra	250.00	
Saroja Devi Manickam	5.00	
Selven Maureemootoo	35.59	
Tiviapragassen Maureemootoo	87.74	
Toshadevi Nataraja	60.00	
A. Paranthaman	6.29	
Eesan Pasupathi	279.06	
Mrunal Patel	501.00	
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	
Rudiren Carpanen Pillay	70.00	
Logavalli Sinsamy	40.14	
Devaladevi Sivaceyon	18.44	
Thambimuttoo & Thavam Sivagnanam	82.51	
Hemavalli Sivalingam	1.93	
Javanya Skanda	28.18	
Devi Tandavan	40.00	
Anonymous	49.00	
Velaauthampillai Vamathaevan	39.00	
Total	2,665.44	

<b>Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund</b>		
Madhu & Deepak Ahuja	499.00	
Arumugam Alagan	465.00	
Ron & Jennifer Burke	93.30	
Ravichandran Ceyon	143.00	
Mootocurpen Harrykrishna	205.45	
Sheresze Hilford	499.00	
Rosa (Gunamaya) Jaramillo	267.96	
Vanore Lawrence	125.00	
Gaurav Malhotra	250.00	
Tiviapragassen Maureemootoo	89.77	
Dayavati Murugan	75.00	
Thila Nadason	1,000.00	
Jay Parikh	499.00	
Mrunal Patel	1,001.00	
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Kirtideva Peruman	19.83	
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Devendra Singh	499.00	
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Devaladevi Sivaceyon	12.68	
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	31.12	
Patudeva Sivaceyon	31.12	
Potriyan Sivanathan	6.23	

<b>Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund</b>		
Roshan Harilela	375.00	
Sheresze Hilford	100.00	
Gunasekaran Kandasamy	339.19	
Anonymous	38.98	
Pankaj N. Lalaji	500.00	
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Anonymous	10.00	
Raja Vishnu	56.66	
Matthew Wiczork	175.00	
Total	2,832.83	

<b>Hindu Education Endowment</b>		
Nalini Ganapati Kodpadi	25.00	
<b>Sundari Peruman Memorial Scholarship Fund</b>		
Eleni Cannon	250.00	

<b>Hindu Press International Endowment Fund</b>		
Hiranya Gowda	63.00	
<b>Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund</b>		
Mano Navaratnarajah	125.00	
Gassa Patten	450.00	
Total	575.00	

<b>Saiva Agamas Trust</b>		
Ganga Sivanathan	210.00	

<b>Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund</b>		
Shyamadeva Dandapani	63.00	
<b>Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund</b>		
Sitara Alahan	54.00	

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund</b>		
Rajadeva Alahan	153.00	
Natraj Narayanswami	11.00	
Total	164.00	
<b>Thank You Bodhinatha Fund</b>		
Hotranatha Ajaya	77.00	
Marlene Carter	300.00	
Anonymous	3,375.00	
Anonymous	100.00	
Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	30.00	
Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00	
Anonymous	101.00	
Anonymous	1,008.00	
Mahalakshmi Gunasegaran	51.00	
Nalini Ganapati Kodpadi	60.00	
Meeravadee Koothan	33.90	
Selven Maureemootoo	33.90	
Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.95	
Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00	
Shanta Devi Periasamy	420.00	
Anonymous	50.00	
Venugopala Reddy	51.00	
Alex Ruberto	45.00	
Nigel Subramaniam Siva	1,008.00	
Ganga Sivanathan	54.00	
Ramesh Sivanathan	22.49	
Niraj Thaker	101.00	
Anonymous	150.00	
Thilagarani Valluvan	25.00	
Vayudeva Varadan	63.00	
Raja Vishnu	56.67	
Michael Wasylikiw	432.00	
Total	8,138.91	

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b>		
James Deville	500.00	
Anonymous	125.00	
Scott Robey	500.00	
Total	1,125.00	
<b>Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund</b>		
Yohini Alvappillai	90.00	
Chitrammal & Sangarapillai Asokan	1,500.00	
Anil Kumar	150.00	
C. Pathmarajah	300.00	
Vigna Rajan	300.00	
Vignesh Sinnathurai	60.00	
Thavaputhiran Sivapalan	300.00	
Thillaiampalam Srijaerajah	150.00	
Vayudeva Varadan	10.80	
Manny Yogarajah	90.00	
Total	2,950.80	

<b>Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment</b>		
Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00	

<b>Hinduism Today Production Fund</b>		
Tina Desai	300.00	
Hiranya Gowda	93.00	
Bhagawandas P. Lathi	1,001.00	
Murli Melwani	500.00	
Natraj Narayanswami	10.50	
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	
Anonymous	125.00	
Asan Tejwani	1,008.00	
Total	3,087.51	

<b>Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund</b>		
Roshan Harilela	375.00	
Sheresze Hilford	100.00	
Gunasekaran Kandasamy	339.19	
Anonymous	38.98	
Pankaj N. Lalaji	500.00	
Tapes Lall	640.00	
Anushia Mohan	300.00	
Sivaramakrish Muthukrishnan	25.50	
Natraj Narayanswami	10.50	
Anonymous	21.00	
Greg Rogers	25.00	
Alex Ruberto	75.00	
Jia Anish Shah	100.00	
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00	
Niraj Thaker	11.00	
Anonymous	10.00	
Raja Vishnu	56.66	
Matthew Wiczork	175.00	
Total	2,832.83	

<b>Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund</b>		
Anonymous	21.00	
Rajendra Sawant	20.00	
Total	41.00	

<b>Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund</b>		
Chiranjeevi Raparla	30.00	

<b>Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment</b>		
Anonymous	100.00	

<b>Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund</b>		
Hiranya Gowda	153.00	
Rajagopal Krishnan	60.00	
Sivaramakrish Muthukrishnan	25.50	
Michael Zimmermann	7.50	
Total	246.00	

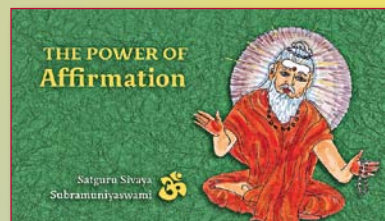
<b>Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund</b>		
Shyamadeva Dandapani	63.00	
<b>Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund</b>		
Rajendra Giri	85.00	

Victoria Lynne Johnson	11.00
Total	96.00
<b>Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment</b>	
Vinaya Alahan	150.00
Jeri Arin	300.00
Marlene Carter	412.00
Anonymous	504.00
James H. Daugherty	75.00
Tina Desai	300.00
Rajendra Giri	15.00
Julia M. Hall	108.00
Tapes Lall	130.00
Ripla Malhotra	25.00
Natraj Narayanswami	25.50
Padmaja Patel	150.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Anonymous	21.00
Ananthakumar Renganathan	100.00
Ganga Sivanathan	150.00
Anonymous	45.00
Soma Sundaram	10.00
Devi Tandavan	50.00
Niraj Thaker	101.00
Anonymous	20.00
Anonymous	28.00
Total	2,769.51
<b>Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund</b>	
Vinaya Alahan	150.00
Kugendra Canaganayagam	60.00
Anonymous	504.00
James H. Daugherty	50.00
Ripla Malhotra	25.00
Natraj Narayanswami	10.00
Anonymous	21.00
Ananthakumar Renganathan	100.00
Dharmalingam Siddhan	55.00
Anonymous	49.00
Total	1,024.00
<b>India Hindu Tribals Endowment</b>	
Niraj Thaker	15.00
<b>Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund</b>	
Vayudeva Varadan	54.00
<b>Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund</b>	
Danyse Crotti	150.00
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Niraj Thaker	33.00
Total	1,229.30
<b>Hindu American Foundation Endowment</b>	
Niraj Thaker	33.00
<b>Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment</b>	
Sitara Alahan	54.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	1.00
Nalini Ganapati Kodpadi	45.00
Total	100.00
<b>Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund</b>	
Arvind Chandrakantan	5,000.00
<b>Bharathi Yoga Dhama Fund</b>	
Bruce & Martha Mitchell	5,000.00
<b>Murugamoorthi Thirukkovil Endowment</b>	
N. Balasubramanian	25,000.00
<b>Insurance Premiums</b>	
Mrunal Patel	3,003.00
<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b>	
Other Donations	600.00
<b>Total Contributions</b>	
\$181,223.92	
<b>Funds at Market Value, Sep 30, 2010</b>	
Total Endowment Funds	\$9,049,921.07
Total Pooled Income Funds	\$211,167.90
<b>Grand Total</b>	
\$9,261,088.97	



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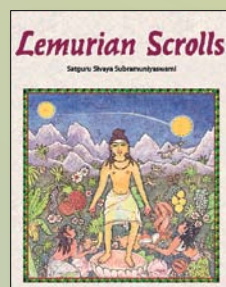
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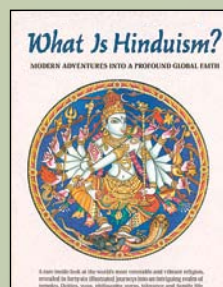
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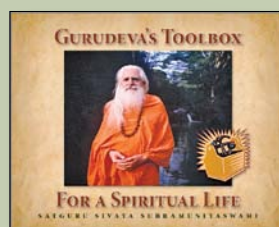
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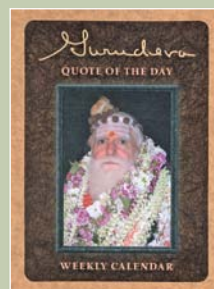
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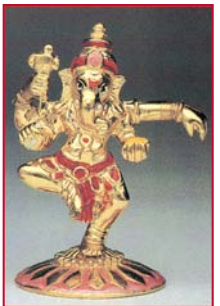
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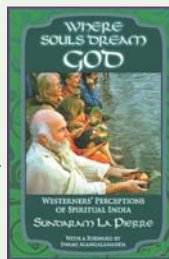


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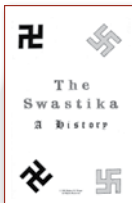
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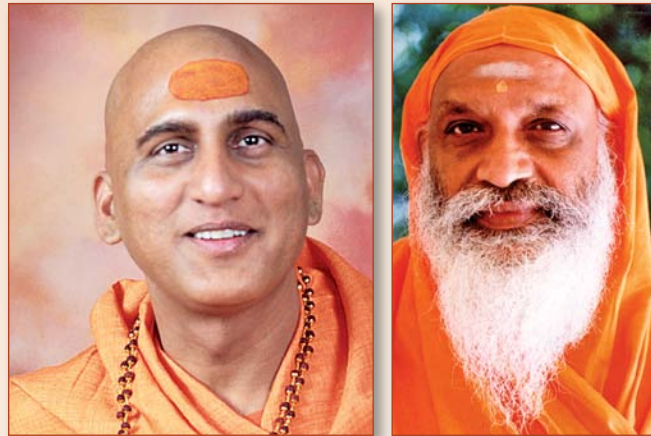
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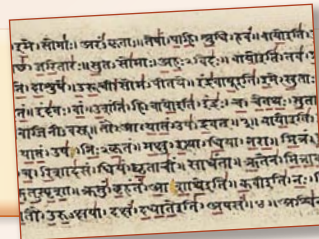


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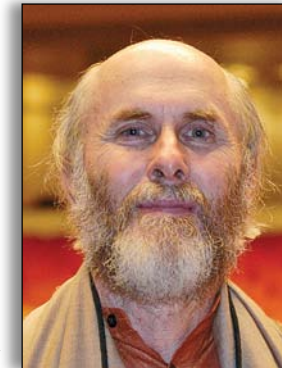
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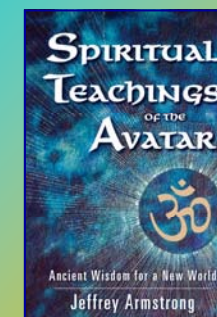
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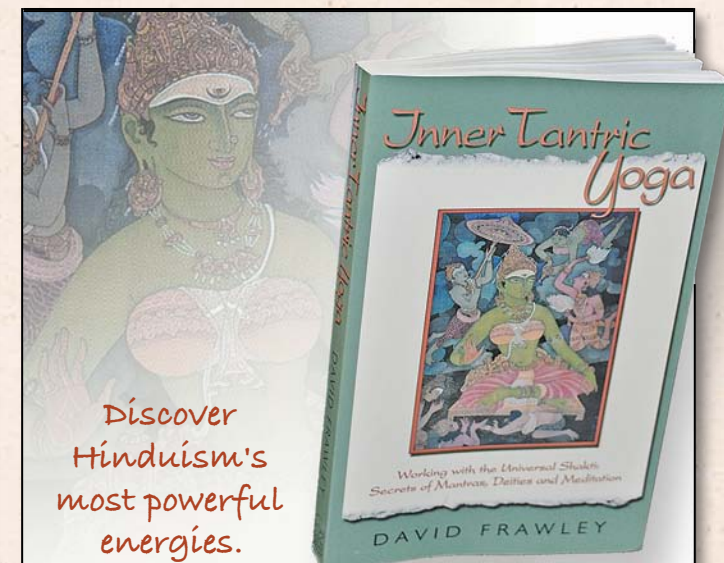
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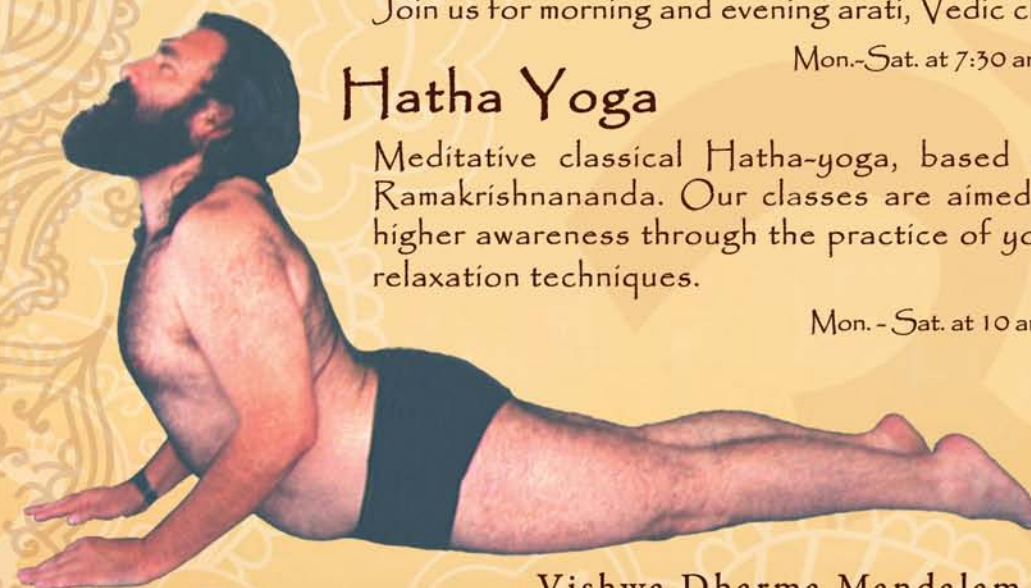
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BY MADHURI SHEKHAR, LOS ANGELES

DIGITAL TEXTBOOKS HAVE BEEN IN THE news lately for two very distinct and important reasons.

In 2007, community college text books for one year cost more than \$900 and prices have soared since then. In colleges, vocational training institutions and other post-secondary schools, the alarming drop-out rates, as high as 50%, lead to tremendous wasted talent and investment. Expenses contribute to the dropout rates.

"Open textbooks" are digital documents offered online under an open-source license. They can reduce costs up to 80%. Digital versions are free, with a low-cost print option. Instructors can customize, compile and edit as per their needs. Over 1,000 professors across the US are already using open textbooks as of fall 2010.

The quality of content is another issue. HINDUISM TODAY has covered the problematic depiction of Hinduism in middle-school textbooks. For example, teachers complain about obsolete science in current texts. Altering or building upon standardized curriculum is often a political and bureaucratic nightmare. Digital textbooks will enable an expedited updating process, allowing more fluidity in the creation and regulation of educational content.

Heavyweight textbook publisher McGraw-Hill has launched Create, an online platform that allows instructors to mix and match existing standard textbook (not open)

content to fit their needs and publish customized course-readers. Flat World Knowledge, a start-up enterprise, offers a similar system with additional features for professors to edit and add their own content, including embedding video, images and other multimedia.

The organization CK-12 is at the forefront of championing a flexible and less expensive system to create and distribute books and online content. CK-12 uses an open-content, web-based collaborative model termed the "FlexBook" to generate and distribute digital educational content to be used by K-12 public schools in California.

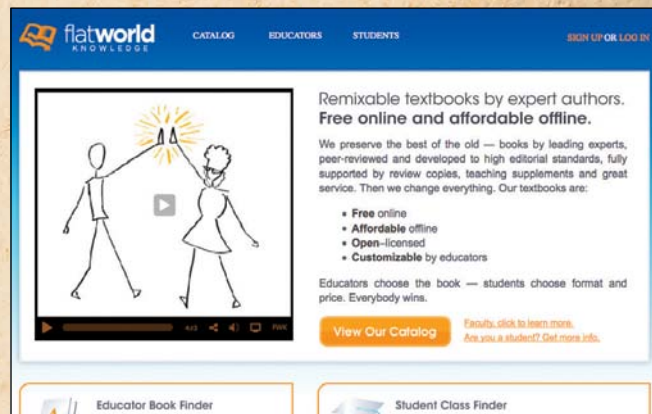
Post-secondary schools and universities can make the transition to digital content much faster than K-12 institutions, as their textbooks and classroom materials are not strictly regulated by state governments and school boards. Leading the way in Australia, the University of Adelaide will provide all 2011 undergraduate science students with a free Apple iPad.

States across the US are taking steps to advance open textbooks in the K-12 sector. In 2010 Illinois passed a bill that expanded the definition of textbooks to include digital textbooks, and increased their funding. Gov.

Schwarzenegger of California signed legislation in October 2010 to increase the quantity, availability and practicality of digital books in the classroom.

In addition to textbooks in document form, another emerging trend in this space is free, open educational videos. Khan Academy, a nonprofit organization, has risen to international fame in less than a year by putting up short

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There are many concerns about this shift to digital content: accessibility, standards quality assurance, infrastructure support, copyright and teacher training. However, it is indisputable that education must become more affordable, and more in-tune with the way the "Google generation" consumes information. The days of students lugging around heavy backpacks and shelling out huge amounts of money for textbooks with a short shelf-life are coming to an end. Parents, educators, policy makers and all others interested in ensuring the best quality education for our students would do well to take note of this developing trend.

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